2007 / C1
Newsmakers, music, athletes, gadgets, fashion that rocked 2007

METRO / A17
QC court orders Ayala Land subsidiary to pay P90M to inventor

ENTERTAINMENT / E5
Dolly Wood: Lessons that 2007 taught the stars

WORLD / A19
Thaksin to return to Thailand from exile

At long last, a cheerful Christmas in Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK—EMBRACED by renewed peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Christian pilgrims from around the world converged on the town of Jesus' birth on Monday to celebrate Christmas—a palpable contrast to the sparse crowds of recent years.

The diverse mix of people included Indios

PHILIPPINE DAILY
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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Pope prays for just solutions to conflicts

VATICAN CITY – POPE BENEDICT XVI on Tuesday said he hoped Christmas would bring consolation to those living in poverty, injustice and war and appealed for just solutions to conflicts in Iraq, the Holy Land, Afghanistan and Africa.

In his "Urbi et Orbi" (To the City and the World) Christmas Day message, the Pope also urged people in modern societies to accept the light of Christ and warned that many human tragedies were caused by environmental upheavals.

Wearing gold-embroidered vestments and a bejeweled bishops' hat, or miter, Benedict urged the crowd to rejoice over the celebration of Christ's birth, which he said he hoped would bring consolation to all people "who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

"May this Christmas truly be for all people a day of joy, hope and peace," he said in his address from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to tens of thousands of people gathered below under a chilled winter sun.

The address was broadcast live to some 57 countries.

Earlier, in a Midnight Mass ushering

AGAIN PAGE A12

POPE Benedict XVI enters in Christmas as he celebrates Midnight Mass at the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. AFP

'Why kill journalists?'

Medical tourism law pushed

By Christian V Esguerra

THE PHILIPPINE MEDICAL Tourism Bureau (PMTB) has enticed some 3,000 million and upward cardiac officers in new cities in Europe, and is preparing for a "mad dash" in three other cities in the same continent next year.

And yet, more efforts are being exerted to boost the country's quiet momentum: Government officials serving the PMTB are preparing a Medical Tourism bill that would "institutionalize" the thriving sector, responsible for the Philippines' added prominence on the global medical map.

"We really need all the support we can get, and this includes support from our Congress," said Dr. Jude del Mundo, head of the highly successful program.

FEATURE, A7

7 medical myths exposed in journal

READING IN DIM LIGHT WON'T damage your eyes, you don't need eight glasses of water a day to stay healthy and shaving your legs won't make the hair grow back faster.

Those well-worn theories are among seven "medical myths" exposed in a paper published on Friday in the British Medical Journal, which wants readers to use its light-hearted foray to set its Christmas edition.

Two UK researchers took aw-

FULL STORY, A7

WHY didn't they just talk to his father instead of killing him? asks Jan Mar's Lintman, the eldest son of slain Davao City broadcaster Fernando Lintman.

Slain radioman's son appeals to gunman

By Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao
and Alcuin Papa in Manila

DAVAO CITY—ON CHRISTMAS EVE, JAN MARC Lintman sent his brothers to sleep. Then, he stayed up all night—for his father's wake.

Only 20 and the oldest of four sons of slain radio broadcaster Fernando "Ferdie" Lintman, Jan Marc presiding over one's messenger to the killer of his father: "Please stop these killings of media men. If you have a deep hatred or were personally hurt by the journalist's work, why can't you just talk to the reporter and set your sides? Why kill them when they are just doing their job?"

In Manila, the Philippine National Police said it would look into any possible involvement of the so-called Davao Death Squad in the murder of Lintman, who was known for his denunciations of official corruption and government wrongdoings in his radio commentaries.

"We are holding at that link. That is one of the angles that we are looking into," PNP Director General Avelino Razon told the Inquirer.

Lintman, 53, was shot dead in his car the other day by a man riding on a motorcycle and wearing a metallic helmet.

Razon also said he had ordered the Regional 11 police com-

MORE DETAILS, A7

Fight against corruption still on, says freed rebel soldier

By Nikko Dizon

THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTmas, former Air Force 2nd Lt. Jovenkhoy "Mali" Maravilla made the nine-hour bus trip to his hometown in Iguig, Cagayan, to surprise his parents whom he had seen only once in the four years that he was detained at Villamor Air Base.

Throughout the trip that began at 3 a.m. in Manila, the 28-year-old Maravilla said he was thinking of how his parents, Abalardo and Alpreza, and town mates would react upon seeing him.

"Then, I also thought, am I really at a loss? It was surreal yet so nice," he said in a Yahoo! message to the Inquirer a few hours after arriving home.

Maravilla was obviously relishing his newfound freedom—like being able to use the Internet, a mobile phone, and cars, walking around without being handcuffed to a military escort.

He laughed and said he had forgotten how to cross the street. When he strolled around Mall of Asia, he thought he had that big castle on his face.

It has been less than a week

FULL STORY, A7

SEEKING to call radio in The Netherlands.

39TH ANNIVERSARY

Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ALAMINOS CITY—THE COMmunist Party of the Philippines marks its 39th anniversary today but few residents of this bustling coastal city in western Pangasinan know that the CPP was born in one of their upland barangays.

Mayor Hernani Braganza, a former member of the Kabataang Makabayan, a leftist group that went underground when martial law was declared in 1972, said he learned about this fact only in 2005. He was then the agrarian reform secretary and member of the government panel engaged in peace talks with the CPP's political arm, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

Braganza said it was CPP

FULL STORY, A7

THE Manzanita house in Barangay Dulacac in Alaminos City played a significant role in the founding of the CPP in 1968.

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Sudden rains, thunder and lightning will very likely occur over and around Metropolitan Manila and the rest of the country will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with some isolated rainshowers.

Search for Lakas 2010 bet is on

Ruling party seeking coalition with NP, LP

By Michael Lim Ubac and Norman Bordadora

THE RULING LAKAS-CHRISTIAN MUSLIM DEMOCRATS HAS opened the selection process for its standard bearer in the 2010 elections, even as it eyes a possible coalition with either the Nationalista Party of Senate President Manuel Villar or the Liberal Party of Senator Manuel "Mar" Roxas.

In a meeting last week with Lakas congressmen, Speaker Jose de Venecia declared that "Lakas will choose its own [presidential] candidate. Nobody can dictate on us."

In other words, the party, not President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, will have the last say on who will be the standard bearer of what is currently the country's largest political party.

Our own bet

"We said that we'd like to choose our own candidate," said Lakas executive director Ray Roquero in a phone interview.

Mr. Arroyo won the vice presidency in 1998 under Lakas, although its presidential candidate, De Venecia, lost in popular vote and former vice president Joseph Estrada, who Arroyo unseated the Presidency in 2001 when Estrada was ousted by a 4-day "people power" revolt, the rule again under Lakas in 2004, winning a six-year mandate. She cannot run for reelection.

Arroyo is Lakas chair while former President Fidel Ramos and De Venecia are chair emeritus and president, respectively.

Shallow bench

"Lakas is open to adopting candidates," said Roquero.

Reports admitted that Lakas has a shallow bench when it comes to presentable who figure strongly in national surveys as who are likely to win the 2010 presidential derby.

"We have to admit that our bench is not deep at this time," he said.

Reports, however, said that Lakas' national membership and machinery affords it the leverage to stay significant in the next elections.

Lakas boasts of 76 congressmen, 42 governors, 98 city mayors and 1,200 municipal mayors.

Although heterogenic is a hallmark of Philippine politics, Roquero said he was confident Lakas will remain the dominant majority party.

Names being floated as possible presidential candidates are Senators Villar, Roxas, Loren Legarda and Richard Gordon, and even Vice President Noli De Castro, he said.

Roquero revealed that "high-level negotiations" are in the works for a possible coalition with the NP.

But he said talks for a possible party coalition were not limited to NP as the ruling party was also considering Roxas' Liberal party.

"If Lakas top honcho has been meeting with Mar Roxas," said Roquero, "he said that the Speaker has also kept close ties with Villar, attending the NP's 100th anniversary celebration in November."

On the other hand, several Lakas members who did not name-to be identified-said they were not authorized to talk on the matter, adding that Arroyonistas they were pushing for the adoption of Legarda, who topped the May 14 mid-term elections amid the Unasian Opposition slate.

Other Lakas members were their own "homegrown talents" in lead the party to victory such as Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando "who is running PNP's support," said another Lakas member.

Lakas will hold a strategic planning workshop on Jan. 7 and 8 to map out their plans for 2010 and launch a party strength raising drive, said Roquero.

It will adopt a criteria for the selection of bets and a formula for entering into coalitions with other parties, he said.

With a report by Gil Cabacungan Jr.

TALE OF TWO CONVICTS

Erap's wish: United country

By Kristine L. Alave and Jocelyn R. Uy

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH "Erap" Estrada yesterday said that his Christmas wish this year was for a united country.

"Let the Christmas be the season for reconcorde and reforms on our national to bring forth a new nation under God which is just, peaceful and prosperous," Estrada in his first Christmas message as a free man.

It was the first time since his detention on plunder charges more than two years ago that Estrada spent the Christmas season at his St. Jude Thaddeus Shrine in San Juan City as a free man.

Estrada, who was convicted of plunder and later pardoned, also thanked his supporters for standing by him in his detention in the plunder trial at the Sandiganbayan.

Estrada's call for unity came two weeks after he revealed that he had "forgiven" President Macapagal-Arroyo, who replaced him after he was ousted in a bloodless revolution in January 2001, and ex-House Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, his former best friend whose accusations led to his impeachment trial and his eventual downfall.

He has decided to forgive his political enemies because it was the right thing and Christmas thing to do, Estrada explained.

"I have said time and again that the Holy Spirit put into my mind and my heart that to live peacefully, forget all the good things you did to others and forget the bad things that others did to you. That is why I am living peacefully now," Estrada said.

He reiterated his pledge to the poor that he will economic hexmark to uplift poverty projects.

"The former president kicked off his Christmas Day celebrations with his son, Mayor JV Ejercito by attending the Misa De Gallo held at the San Juan plaza on the night of Dec. 24.

Estrada said this Christmas was the "most meaningful" yet for him, saying that this was the first Nativity celebrations in six years where he could celebrate freely with his friends and loved ones.

"I've nothing more to ask. My wish is for the country, that it will no longer be [plagued] with graft and corruption," said Estrada.

Jalosjos: Not quite orange

By Julie S. Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—HISTORIA and Imad Rasalul the San Ramon Prison and Penal Farm Colony, some 30 kilometers outside this city where recalled convict Romeo Jalosjos spent Christmas Day.

"There were so many luxury cars parked outside. Too many people going inside and leaving. Da prison farm," said a resident, who asked not to be identified.

A resident said it was the first time it has happened.

Jalosjos was supposedly released by prison authorities on Dec. 17 after he reportedly completed his life sentence for rape.

But after a public outcry, the prison department recalled his release, saying the warden had misunderstood his release date.

He had sadly dubbed this as "orange Christmas," referring to the color of prison uniforms, although he has not actually donned his orange uniform yet, according to his son, Seth Frederick "Sidon" Jalosjos, Zamboanga del Norte's First District board member.

"They (penal officials) don't oblige my father to wear it," Seth told the inquirer in a phone interview. "He is no longer a prisoner. He has served his sentence," he added.

Besides, added the young Jalosjos, "even if they force him to wear the uniform, they don't have the size of my father."

"All he wants for Christmas is to see his children. My father is a family man and his wish is for the government to let him go and enjoy his freedom."

While personnel of the San Ramon prison refused to be interviewed, the Jalosjoses confirmed that the former congressman has been released.

Romeo's son, Seth Frederick "Sidon" Jalosjos, Zamboanga del Norte's First District board member, said:

"They (penal officials) don't oblige my father to wear it," Seth told the

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Joma recalls birth of CPP in Alaminos

From page A1

founding chair Jose Ma. Sison who told him about it during a meeting in the Netherlands, where the latter has lived in self-exile since the late 1980s.

Sison, the chief political consultant of the NDF confirmed in an e-mail to the Inquirer that it was in a "hamlet" in Alaminos where the CPP "congress of reestablishment" was held on Dec. 26, 1968.

According to Dungaoa, that hamlet is the remote Barangay Dalacan at the tri-boundary of Alaminos and the towns of Bani and Bolinao.

Sison said the meeting place was a hut near the house of the Honrubias, the parents-in-law of Jeshur Garcia, one of the CPP founders. Garcia died in 1998.

Christmas Day

"We did not use the Honrubia house. Dos the congress] has a smaller type of bamboo house used for rest from farm work," Sison said. "We had to make for some 30 minutes from the Honrubia house to the smaller house."

Sison said the CPP founders arrived in Alaminos by Dumtanoo bus from Metro Manila on Christmas Day in separate batches, and walked from the bus terminal all the way to the site.

The place was chosen because "it was safe, secluded and distant enough from Manila," Sison said.

He said Garcia's in-laws and wife were not aware of the nature of the meeting. "They must have thought we were having a picnic."

A total of 11 delegates attended the congress, including Sison, Garcia, Cadres and Ventura and Nilo Collantes, and two students from a Manila multi-sector.

"I [will not] mention the names of the living because I do not have their permission to mention," Reyes said.

Dungaoa said the only means of transport to Dalacan at that time was the kalesa (horse-driven cart) or on horseback.

He said political-ion campaigning for elections had to use the dusty uphill road in Dalacan and "it took Rizza a day to get there."

The road has since been paved, and travel time has been reduced to 30 minutes by car.

Meanwhile, known for Hunduhod (Hush Natural Park, is now also a popular tourist spot.

Hardly changed

But except for the paved road, Dalacan has not changed much since 1968, Dungaoa said. It is still a sparsely populated farming village surrounded by thick vegetation.

"I was never able to go back to the place," Sison said. "Now, after 39 years, I have forgotten [its] name. We have long [referred to] the place ... as 'somewhere between Central and Southern Luzon.'"

Sison suggested that Dungaoa develop the site into a tourist spot. "Put there an enchanted place where the CPP founding congress was held.

"Since 39 years ago, the CPP has become the revolutionary party of the proletariat and the Filipino people and has been in existence for almost forever in Philippine history," he said.

Dungaoa agreed that the CPP was "now part of our political history." He said a "marker" would be put there to indicate that the party was "born in that area."

Recalled Sison: "Three should still be a tree there because one of the leaders left sabog on a sturdy branch and left. I do not remember what kind of tree [it was]."

Can't stop it

The lockout was made initiated Mariano [De Dassel Lacas, who became a leading leader of the CPP's Northern Luzon Regional Committee.

He died in tickets in the early 1970s, Sison said.

In a statement issued to mark the CPP anniversary, Sison said the Arroyo administration could not stop the "armed revolution," which he described as a "just cause."

"The Arroyo regime cannot destroy but conceivingly causes the armed revolution to advance ... It is currently the best servant of the armed revolution," Sison said, adding:

"It is therefore understandable why this armed revolution is indestructible and has successfully persevered against the Marcos fascist dictatorship and the subsequent pseudo-democratic regimes."

Saying that the CPP's armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), was "gaining strength and advancing," Sison boldfied the capacity of the police and military in preventing the spread of the armed revolution.

He said "many keen observers" in saying that the military and police could occupy and control only 10 percent of Philippine territory, and that "government troops could not concentrate their numerous units on more than 10 percent of the NPA guerrilla fronts at any given time."

3 factors

Sison said the CPP was confident that its revolution would "continue to gain strength as massive corruption in government forces the masses to join the communist underground movement."

He said three factors were contributing to the "unsustainability and unrest" of the GPP regime:

• The alleged failure of the system of government, which had supposedly been appropriated by globalization and the wars on terror.

• The Filipinos' "desire" for revolutionary change, which purportedly resulted in mass short alleged view of President Macapagal-Arroyo as "the paragon of social, economic, political and moral bankruptcy."

• The CPP's "resolute and effective leadership" of the movement.

AFP, PNP forces put on red alert

THE MILITARY AND POLICE are on red alert and "defensive alert," respectively, for the 39th founding anniversary today of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"There are just measures to ensure that our troops are more vigilant in the field [but] any attack that may occur during [the CPP] celebration, said Maj. Romeo Zagala, the Armed Forces' deputy public information chief.

He said the AFP's police units will alert back effort at soon particular.

The CPP and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), have declared a truce—two days on Dec. 24 and 25, and Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

On the other hand, the AFP is observing a 22-day unilateral suspension of military operations (Jantex) that will end midnight of Jan. 6.

"We must always be ready for any eventuality. Since if they have declared a ceasefire as well, we cannot neither there must be it," Zagala said.

Director General Avelino Razon, chief of the Philippine National Police, said the PNP would continue to respect the truce declared by the military.

"The PNP is on defensive alert in connection with the CPP anniversary. We are still on the alert for any kind of offensive military operations declared by the Armed Forces," Razon told the Inquirer by phone.

He said the PNP would only "defend communities and other government installations from any attack by the NPA, and would "refrain from launching any offensives."

Razon also said he had instructed his regional commanders to maintain a "high level of alert" to anticipation of any NPA attack.

Both the military and the police had branded the CPP-NPA "terrorist" despite the "ceasefires," saying it was made a day after the insurgents attacked a police station in Hinobaganan, Samar. Bikki Dizon and Alkazin Ilagan

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Fight against corruption still on, says freed rebel ...

From page A1

President Macapagal-Arroyo granted the 52 soldiers conditional pardon and restored their rights.

The 27 were convicted of rebellion and illegal possession of firearms and explosives.

Trillanes, who was released from detention on Dec. 27 after the Supreme Court ruled that Arroyo's proclamation granting him amnesty was valid, said he was not backing down from his campaign against corruption in government.

"I don't remember the exact words but they kept on repeating that I'm not supposed to [be] talking anymore," he said. He was already thinking of how to start anew outside the military.

A graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class 2001, Trillanes said there had been an increase in the number of corruption charges in the AFP since the Magdalo group took over. Unlicensed to demand reforms in the military and the government.

"If I stay in the service and rise up the ranks, I might find myself corrupt by the system and joining that at the very beginning. That's why I fought for it. Maybe for my own naiveté," Trillanes said.

The fight, he said, had remained to be against corruption in the government and the AFP.

Trillanes said he had entered a plea bargain in exchange for a thorough probe of the "Hello Garci" scandal, which he said would be able to coordinate more in the country if he were a free man, not because he had learned his lesson [as Magdalo].

Since his release, he has been considering his options—a security officer, a graphic artist, business studies, politics, and the books in the manner of Shamgar, most.

Divine providence

He says have led some of the best of his life while in jail, but he said he looked at his incarceration as a part of divine providence. "I know there was a purpose

for it. Maybe for my own naiveté," Trillanes said.

He said he was able to carry enough strength in the prosecution of the AFP.

Trillanes also recently started a T-shirt printing business with his fellow Magdalo officers, the 26-31 Christopher Gregorio, who did not enter a plea bargain and continues detained.

He said the challenge to himself and other freed Magdalo officers was how to do this without sacrificing or compromising the principles they fought for four years ago.

To the other detained soldiers, Trillanes said: "I will always pray for them. I believe the men will stay committed for the change that we all crave."

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7 medical myths exposed in journal

From page A1

on common beliefs and examined the evidence for evidence to support them.

Despite frequent mentions in the popular press of the need to drink eight glasses of water, they found no scientific basis for the claim.

The complete lack of evidence has been recorded in a study published by the American Journal of Psychology, they said.

The others are "myths" too:

• Reading in dim light ruins your eyesight.

The majority of eye experts believe it is unlikely to do any permanent damage, but it may make your eyes tired. Most people will have trouble focusing, the researchers said.

• Shaving makes hair grow back thicker or coarser.

It has no effect on the thickness or rate of hair regrowth, studies say. But stubble lacks the finer layer of unshaven hair, giving the impression of coarseness.

• Eating turkey makes you feel sleepy.

It does contain an amino acid called tryptophan that is involved in sleep and mood control. But turkey has no more of the acid than chicken or beef. Eating lots of food and drink at Christmas are probably the real cause of sleepiness.

• We are only 10 percent of our brains.

This myth arose as early as 1907, but imaging shows no area of the brain is silent or completely inactive.

• Hair and fingernails continue to grow after death.

This idea may stem from glandular secretion. The researchers said the skin dries out and retracts after death, giving the appearance of longer hair or nails.

• Alcoholic glasses are dangerous on buses.

Despite widespread concerns, studies have found minimal interference with mechanical equipment.

The research was conducted by nurse Carroll, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the Regenstief Institute, Indianapolis, and Rachel Vreeman, a fellow in children's health services research at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Reuters

Pope prays for just solutions to conflicts

From page A1

in Christmas, the Pope urged the faithful to set aside time in their lives for God and the needy.

Echoing a theme he has raised about an increasingly secular world, Benedict said that many people are as if there is no room for spiritual matters in their lives.

The 80-year-old Benedict wore his trademark scarlet robe's significance of the birth of Jesus.

He drew parallels between what he perceived as modern society's refusal of God and the story of how Jesus was born in a manger because there was no space for his family at a nearby inn.

"In some way, mankind is awaiting God, waiting for him to draw near. But often the material overwhelms, there is no room for him," he said.

'God won't be shut out'

But the message of Jesus' birth is also that "God does not allow himself to be shut out," Benedict said. "He finds a space, even if it means entering through the stable. Even are people who see his light and pass it by."

In his traditional Urbi et Orbi address, the Pope said, "May the light of the risen Christ continue to enlighten every human being, shine forth and bring consolation to those who live in the darkness of poverty, injustice and war."

Christmas should bring hope to those "still denied their legitimate aspirations to a dignified life, to peace, to health, education, stable employment, to full participation in civil and political responsibilities, free from oppression and protected from conditions that offend against human dignity."

Victims of conflict, terrorism

The Pope, marking the third Christmas season of his reign, said he was close to society's most vulnerable members, who were often the main victims of conflict and terrorism—women, children, the elderly, migrants, refugees and everyone.

He mentioned East Timor, religious and political tensions, intolerance, terrorist disagreements, and all forms of injustice and discrimination aimed destroying the minimal ideas of many countries and undermining international relations."

On a day that signifies peace, he said he was close to those living in places where "the grim sound of arms continues to reverberate."

Crisis situations

He spoke of Darfur, Somalia, the Democratic republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Holy Land, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Balkans and "many other crisis situations that unfortunately are frequently forgotten."

The Pope made another appeal for environmental protection, saying that the months of migrants, refugees and evacuees "is also increasing because of frequent natural disasters, often caused by alarming environmental upheavals."

In his Midnight Mass homily, Benedict called on the people to find time and space for God amid their suffering.

He said: "Man is so preoccupied with himself, he has such urgent need of all the space and all the time for his own things, that nothing remains for others, for his fellowmen, for God. There is no room."

The Pope linked the Christmas message to the Church's growing environmental concerns, referring to early theologians who interpreted Christ's role as also a healer of the Earth and universe.

'Feast of restored creation'

"He came to restore beauty and dignity to creation, to the universe. This is what began at Christmas and makes the angels rejoice. The Earth is restored to good order by virtue of the fact that it is opened up to God ... Thus Christmas is a feast of restored creation."

Under Benedict, the Vatican has been taking steps toward greater environmental action, a key element of which has been to involve more in reforestation projects aimed at offsetting its carbon emissions.

Benedict asked the faithful to make room for God, as well as the less fortunate, in their lives.

Space for God

"Do we have time for our neighbor who is in need of a word from us, from me, or in need of my affection? Or for the unborn who is in need of help? For the asylum seeker, the refugee who is seeking asylum? Do we have time and space for God?"

As the Midnight Mass began, Benedict blessed the crowd of pilgrims, Romans and tourists, as he walked in a procession up the main aisle to the strains of "Adeste Fideles" serenaded with red poinsettia flowers.

As a choir sang, Benedict sprinkled incense on the altar under Bernini's massive bronze baldachin before opening the service with the traditional words for peace in Latin: "Pax" (Peace be with you).

"Et cum spiritu tuo." ("And also with you.")

Giant Christmas tree

Four children, some in native costume from their communities, brought flowers to the altar, placing them near a statue depicting baby Jesus, as Benedict joined a choir in a hymn.

For those unable to get into the midnight service there were giant screens set up in St. Peter's Square, where tens of locals festive with a surrounding Christmas scene and the Vatican's Nativity scene.

Officials unveiled the life-size nativity on Monday, revealing the statues of Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents, in a huge house-like structure located next to the giant Christmas tree.

Jesus' home

This year, the scene of Jesus' birth was depicted in a recreation of Joseph's Nazareth home, rather than the traditional manger in Bethlehem.

Officials at the unveiling said the shift underscored the idea that Jesus was born not just in a single place, but everywhere and for everyone.

Hours before the Midnight Mass, Benedict briefly appeared at his studio window to light a candle as a symbol of peace, blessing the crowd with the light before leaving it on the sill. —Reports from Reuters and AP

A cheerful Christmas in Bethlehem

From page A1

American tourists, dressed in tinsel, waving toilet and Hanukkah menorahs wearing lights and playing bagpipes.

"I'm Catholic. I always wanted to see the beginning of Christianity, the whole history. It's something you grow up with," said Ricardo Olivoli, a 27-year-old schoolteacher from Virginia. Virginia, who called the experience "wonderful," although she said she missed her family and church back home.

"If you can't be with family, it's good to be here where it all went down," added David Collett, 21, of Kelowna, Bolivia, who is studying Middle Eastern studies at Tel Aviv University in Israel.

Despite the festive atmosphere, a heavy police deployment, the presence of Israel's massive separation barrier and tension among Bethlehem's other overlooking Christian celebration served as reminders of the lingering tensions in the region.

In the years following the 1993 Oslo peace accord, Bethlehem attracted tens of thousands of tourists for Christmas. But the number of visitors plummeted after the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000.

Tourism has begun to recover in recent years as fighting has slowed. This year, it got a boost from the renewal of peace talks last month at a summit in Annapolis, Maryland.

Curious teenagers

While many celebrants appeared to be curious teenagers and other band members, Israeli tourists officials said they expected some 30,000 pilgrims to cross from Jerusalem into neighboring Bethlehem. They said that was an increase of about 50 percent over last year, though well below the peak years.

Tourism workers handed out sweets and flowers to pilgrims, and smiling Israeli soldiers posed for pictures with travelers.

Bethlehem's governor, Salah Tamari, said all of the town's 3,000 hotel rooms were booked.

Priests and monks, tourists, Palestinian families and Palestinian police jammed in Manger Square outside the Church of the Nativity, the site where tradition holds Christ was born.

Worshipers handed heads, roasted peanuts, carton candy, steamed corn and Turkish coffee, as city restaurants watched the festivities from balconies and rooftops.

A four-story cypress tree, strung with lights, hung with red and gold globes and topped with a yellow star, towered outside the church.

Santa regalia

Children and teenagers strolling through the square were red-and-white Santa Claus hats, some wearing full Santa regalia. Balloons bobbed from students' stands and strings children clutched in their hands. After nightfall, the square was lit in a sea of red and yellow lights and Christian stars.

"This year is much better than the last seven years for tourism," said shopkeeper Jacques Awas, whose wooden handicrafts shop offered crosses, rosaries and nativity scenes. "The atmosphere is better in general. There is relative calm, [but] the security situation is still ..."

Palestinian scouts, some wearing kilts and berets adorned with pompoms, marched through the streets playing drums and bagpipes. Throughout the evening, choirs and orchestras performed hymns and Christian carols in a multitude of languages.

Speaking to reporters as he came out of prayers at a Bethlehem mosque, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expressed hope that the renewed peace talks would bring about an independent Palestinian state by the end of next year.

"We hope that this year will be the year of independence for the Palestinian people. God willing, this will be the year of security and stability and economic prosperity for the Palestinians," he said.

Annual procession

Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the top Roman Catholic official in the Holy Land, began the Christian celebrations with his annual procession from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

Sabbah—who could only enter Bethlehem after passing through a massive steel gate in Israel's separation barrier—a stretch of concrete slabs built to shield Bethlehem from gunfire during Israel-Israeli movement-of-movement escorted Sabbah, in his flowing vestments robe, to the gate, and border police danced in step behind him.

At his Christmas homily delivered at Midnight Mass, Sabbah delivered a public call for equal rights for people and love in the Holy Land—and independence for the Palestinian people.

"This land of God cannot be for some a land of life and for others a land of death, exclusion, occupation or political imprisonment," Sabbah said, urging the Palestinians to hold his position.

The barrier was just one of the reminders of the unrelenting troubles.

Hundreds of police were deployed in Manger Square and on neighboring rooftops, and before celebrants walked through the streets sweeping cars and buildings for explosives.

Exodus of Christians

Years of violence with Israel, in fighting among rival Palestinian factions and economic hardship caused by the barrier have all contributed to the departure of a growing number of Christians from Bethlehem. Officials say from 35 per cent to 50 percent of the town's 60,000 people (Christians, compared to 80 percent in the 1990s.

Johnny Giacaman, a Bethlehem native who now lives in the United Arab Emirates but returned this year to visit his family, said he was among the people who've left.

"There is nothing for young people here," he said, standing outside his family's gift shop. "Christians are leaving in high numbers. I am an example. If this continues, in five to 10 years the Church of the Nativity will be a museum."

In his homily, Sabbah expressed religious sentiments and lamented the dwindling number of Christians. "To all of you Christians in this land, you who are tempted to emigrate, you who are the object of everyone's preoccupation, I say to you what Jesus told us: Do not be afraid." —Report from AP

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Cops release artist's sketch of suspected killer

By Alburo W. Lopez

THE KILLER WAS STOCKY AND HAD A mole on the upper right side of his lips.

That was the description which a witness gave to the task force looking into the Mindanao incoming member of radio commentator Fredrick Gumaru in Davao City.

With the help of the witness, whose identity has been withheld, investigators have come up with an artist's sketch of the motorcycle-riding gunman.

Task Force "Batman," named after the name by which Gumaru was popularly known, is composed of the Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation Detection Group, PNP Regional and Davao City police investigators, and the National Bureau of Investigation-Davao (Nabi).

Killer was motorcycle

In his complaint report yesterday, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, the NBI-Nabi said the witness, whose identity was withheld, had described the gunman as "motorcycle."

He also wore a helmet, was believed to be 5'7" to 5'8", and estimated to weigh 75 kilos.

Investigators had to rely on the motorcycle description because Gumaru's companions at the time he was shot in his car—Edgar Barroso and Lucio Cortes—had told they did not see the assailant's face because they "instinctively ducked" when the shots rang out, the report said.

ARTIST'S SKETCH of Gumaru's suspected killer

Escape routes

The 4:30 p.m. broadcaster was driving along R. Castillo Street, Barangay Dumalo, Agdao, Davao City when the motorcycle-riding tandem on a red Honda XRM motorcycle with an accomplice, that him motor with a .45 cal. gun.

As part of its investigation, the NBI team is still try to track down the possible routes taken by the suspects from the crime scene, the report said.

The NBI will also look into the cases Gumaru was involved in prior to his death. These included a complaint at the Land Transportation Office in Davao concerning a taxi driver who refused to take a passenger, leading to the driver's fining.

NBI-Manila team

A team of 5-10 senior agents from the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila are going to Davao to conduct an inquiry.

The Department of Justice had ordered the creation of the team.

In a memorandum, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez directed NBI deputy director for regional operations services, Reynaldo Esmeralda, and deputy director for intelligence service, Ruel Lasala, to "immediately form a special team that will investigate the killing, identify perpetrators, gather evidence against them and ensure their prosecution."

"The slaying of a member of the press is a direct assault upon press freedom and this should not be countenanced," Gonzalez said.

Esmeralda said the NBI-Manila team would coordinate with the PNP and NBI regional units in Davao City, while the PNP Region and General Santos City director offices would provide support.

The Manila team will be led by NBI Special Capital Region executive officer Reynaldo Vallejo and Criminal Investigation Division head Agent Remy Ben Ray Lim.

Medical tourism law pushed

From page A1

The draft of the bill is expected to be completed next year, and Gilbe Rep. Joel Villanueva is being considered as its sponsor, Del Mundo said.

The idea is to enhance the partnership between the government and the private sector to further boost the program, he said.

According to Del Mundo, the Philippines is running 50th among Asian countries in the medical tourism industry. The field is topped by Thailand, followed by India, Singapore and Malaysia.

2 'high-end' fields

With a Medical Tourism Law in place, the PMTP is expected to encourage more local countries to venture into other promising areas such as cancer cellular immunology, stem cell therapy, and regenerative medicine.

These three "high-end" fields are the program's latest features, and the government has opened offices in Paris and Prague to introduce these to the European market, Del Mundo said.

So far, he said, the three procedures had drawn some 30 European patients.

"These fields are the future of our medical tourism program," Del Mundo said.

To complete terms, he said, the Philippines must find the technology to develop a new kidney in an ailing patient, as well as the capability to treat cancer through "nanotechnology."

Particularly involved in the three high-end procedures are National Kidney and Transplant Institute, The Medical City, St. Luke's Medical Center and Lung Center of the Philippines, Del Mundo said.

The PMTP will be further promoted in the "road shows" scheduled early next year in Milan, Berlin and London, he said.

'Why kill journalists?'

From page A1

murders, Chief Supt. Andres Caro, in look-at all other angles.

Shadowy group

The Davao Death Squad is a shadowy vigilante group known for executing, sometimes in broad daylight, drug dealers and other criminals in Davao City.

It was also believed to have been behind the killing of band-leading journalist Jun Pala in September 2003. Pala was a critic of Davao Mayor Rodrigo Duterte.

Gumaru once called on Task Force to the group, but the source has repeatedly denied any such link.

Police Director Jefferson Soriano, chief of the PNP Task Force Usig, said investigators were looking into three possible motives.

Police theories

Soriano said one possible motive might have to do with Gumaru's hiking commentaries.

Another area being looked into concerned a case Gumaru had filed against an officer under station in connection with his being supposedly without justifiable reason.

Still another theory involved a complaint Gumaru had filed against a taxi driver that led to the confiscation of the driver's license.

Soriano also said Gumaru entertained illegal logging activities in the Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental.

Task Force Usig is a special police unit that investigates killings of militants and journalists.

Gumaru was the fifth journalist killed this year and the 34th media member to be murdered under the Arroyo administration, according to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines.

The international media watchdog group Reporters Without Borders called on the Arroyo administration to "quickly wrap down" the murderers of Gumaru.

"On this Christmas Eve, the Philippine press community has again been hit by a real life murder," the group said on its website.

"The method used leaves no doubt that it was a targeted killing of a journalist ... President Arroyo and the national police chief have a duty to give the local investigators all the resources they need to catch the gunmen and those who put them up to it."

Suddenly, they were orphans

Gumaru's murder suddenly left his four sons orphans. He wife died of lung cancer two years ago.

"Christmas is not merry for us," said Jun Blanc, who had rushed to the crime scene shortly after news broke out about the shooting.

"I didn't expect that he will die this way (unbound)," he said in an interview with the Inquirer.

Although several people had sent him and his brothers food for media-Aurora, Jun Blanc said there was no reason for them to celebrate Christmas.

He stayed up all night to accept visitors at Crossapedians Funeral Homes, a cousin said.

Jun Blanc's three brothers—Ryan Dyrdrand, 18, Steve, 15, and Von Carlo, 13—slept in order at the funeral parlor.

With their father gone, Jun Blanc, a third year International Studies student, said he would soon have to find work for them to survive.

Ryan Ferdinand is also in college, while Steve and Von Carlo are in high school.

Gumaru was set on his way being from work at radio station dxGO when he was shot. The two other broadcasters with him, Lucio Cortes and Edgar Barroso, were unhurt.

People's Park

"We will try to look if this is work-related, a personal grudge of opinion he might have aligned into the air or [if this is related to] his campaign against the communist New People's Army," Senior Supt. Jaime Hermosisima, city police chief, told the Inquirer.

Road transparents, dxGO station manager, said that in the past weeks, Gumaru had been criticizing the recently opened "People's Park," a modernization-poor project of the city government.

Gumaru alleged that the trees planted in the park were overpriced, Antequera said.

Gumaru also survived an attack by gunmen outside his radio booth at Radio Naglalo, used his station, in the late 1980s.

Provincial police advisor Jesus Dureza said six of Gumaru's colleagues died in their off-job.

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Missionary or terrorist? Egyptian out on bail

By Jeoffrey Maitem
Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—An Egyptian missionary arrested last week for allegedly planting a Christmas bomb attack was released by police over the weekend after a local court allowed him to post bail.

Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police director in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, said the release by phone that Cotabato City Judge Cadir Solon had granted the petition for bail of Muhammad Sayed, a teacher of Arabic language and Islamic religion at the Madrid Islamic School here.

Sayed, identified in wire reports from Cairo as sheikh Muhammed alSayyid Ahmed Moosa, was arrested on Dec. 18 after a police and military team raided his rented apartment and reportedly found materials for homemade bombs, 60-mm mortar ammunition, timing devices, cans with batteries, schematic wiring diagrams for blasting, and a military manual of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Bailable

"His illegal possession of explosives case is bailable. However, the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) has asked the investigation office in Manila to issue a hold departure order against him," said Goltiao, who also revealed that the case would be "covered by a political decision."

Sheikh Moosa, with banking of Egypt's ministry of religious affairs, is reportedly the subject of top-level negotiations.

Reports from Cairo also identified him as an envoy of Sunni Islam's highest seat of learning, the Al Azhar. The mainstream group issues had told Egypt's official Mena news agency that Moosa was arrested "by mistake" and that he was personally following up the case of Sheikh.

AFP reported that Egypt's religious affairs ministry issued a statement saying that Sheikh Moosa was being well treated but that there were reports in the highest level between the two governments to try to secure his release.

"Sheikh Moosa is a man of faith who represents a prestigious religious institution," the ministry said.

Egyptian Ambassador Sahra Mesalhi Kamel Magdoub visited Sayed over the weekend and said his presence is tribulation as an Islamic existence. Any note crossed by a bilateral agreement between the Philippines and Egypt.

But the government's Anti-Terror Council ownership briefed at the claim that Moosa was arrested by mistake.

"We stand by the work of our operatives in the field," Ricardo Blancaflor, Junior Undersecretary and spokesperson of the Anti-Terror Council, told the Inquirer by phone.

With reports from Nikko Dizon, AFP

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Philippine Daily INQUIRER

OPINION

Fighting the real enemy

AS WALT KELLY'S CARTOON CHARACTER POGO once said, "We have met the enemy and they are us." This, in a nutshell, is the problem facing the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Bravery, dedication, all the martial virtues are present, often in an extraordinary degree, in the officers and men of the AFP. The problem is that the AFP is also riddled with the corrupt, the greedy, the abusive and the stupid. And so the

EDITORIALS

arms, for the protection of the state and our soldiers' lives, the AFP never has enough, and what it has is both antiquated and poorly maintained.

Aside from the experience in waging war gained by our troops during the bloody fights in Mindanao in the 1970s, in many respects the AFP remains bogged down in the past. Its armaments more often than not belong in World War II movies; its leadership structure is top-heavy; its tactics and methods rooted in the age of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, with its ever optimistic faith in a citizen army, instead of a purely professional force.

And yet, from its grossly corrupt and bloated form achieved under martial law, the Armed Forces has gone a long way to redeem its institutional reputation. Rebels and putschists may have tarnished its image, but on the whole, our soldiers have adapted well to a republican regime grounded in civilian supremacy over the military. Our soldiers have proven themselves were they are the soldiers of the people and not of a clique that considers itself superior to the whole.

Still the root cause of inefficiency and lack of morale remains: low salaries, insufficient benefits and antique weaponry.

It was hoped that under President Fidel V. Ramos, an ex-general, the military would be given its due. What Ramos did, instead, was pay off old debts by filling the civilian bureaucracy with ex-military appointees. And then, during a time of relative plenty, he allowed billions to be earmarked for the modernization of the AFP—and then promptly ordered that the funds be diverted to "prestige" projects, such as the Centennial Expo, that have yielded nothing but scandal.

Are we advocating guns before butter? No, but a nation that considers it necessary to maintain a standing army must give its soldiers the arms with which to justify their existence. In real terms, we do not have a real AFP; we have a glorified Philippine Constabulary. This is a situation that cannot be allowed to foster because it will result in what everyone fears: resentment and restlessness among the ranks. Our soldiers deserve better than what they're getting. And they can serve better if they get what they deserve.

We offer up this reflection because this is the time our soldiers are to be home, and enjoy, for once, peace and quiet away from operations in the field.

By now the meager bonuses of the troops will have been spent, and many of our fighting men and women can only look forward to a new year riddled with debts, and without their fair share of benefits. Meanwhile, their officers play the political game, and party up in luxury.

What comes next

AFTER THE FIREWORKS, THE DRINKING, the parties and toasts—what's next? We are at a new beginning, approaching a new year, but we are the same people.

We are not seers; it is not for us to predict what will be. But are our set what we will not be if we do not change certain things.

There will be no hope for this country if its best minds continue to be sent abroad. If its young are reared by distant relatives, and grow rootless and wild in the process. If its population continues to be deprived of decent homes, land on which to live and the just fruits of their labor. If civic leaders continue to rob, steal and cheat to an extent that is the public imagination has already surpassed the larcenous record of Ferdinand Marcos. If its forests continue to be denuded, its rivers filled with filth, its air poisoned and its agriculture is kept backward by fighting land reform.

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Requiem for Adrian Cristobal and Peping del Rosario

IT IS A SAD CHRISTMAS FOR JOURNALISTS with the deaths of two colleagues, first, Peping del Rosario, photographer of The Manila Chronicle and later chief photographer of the Daily Express, and, a few weeks later, Adrian Cristobal, writer and intellectual. With their deaths, seventeen has done friends, esteemed colleagues and accomplished craftsmen.

Peping, much older than I, was a photographer of the Chronicle's This Week Magazine when I joined it. Magazine staffers have enviable jobs in newspapers. They go to the presidence for special stories, usually with a photographer in tow, all at company expense. My favorite photographer was Peping.

One of my firsts for assignments with Peping was a visit to Manuel Arguilla country in Bagabtoran, La Union. With Johnny Gutierrez and Antonio Enriquez, we drove to Bagabtoran to stand in the Arguilla home in Bagabtoran for less than a week and visited all the places and characters in his short stories. I remember the fish sauce vessels were there in full bloom and beautiful. Peping took all the pictures.

Back, much later, we were planning a similar tour on the World of Manuel Arguilla, but in Mindoro, with NVM himself coming with me to show us the scenes in his stories, but death overtook him before we could do it.

I was planning another trip with Peping on the Bataan peninsula, as a feature for the mid-1950s was like the end of the world, when, in the very day we were set to leave, he was taken ill. I tried to get a substitute photographer but no one wanted to go to a God forsaken place called Bataan. So I borrowed a camera and went myself.

At that time, there was only one plane flight a week to that northernmost district of the Philippines. On the day that the plane was set to take the fish to civilization was due to arrive, the sky was overcast. He would have the photos riveting overhead but obviously the pilot could not see the flares runways as he flew back to the mainland. This meant I had to wait another week to go home.

When I got back to the Chronicle, I gave my films to Peping to process. After he saw the photographs, he asked me stop viewing that he was unable to go with me. "Never mind, we'll go together next time," I told Peping.

But that never came with Peping never came. Before I never again to Bataan, much later, it was with you do I only and it was for a travel story on Mt. Natib and Magazine of the Daily Express. Peping later became the chief photographer of the Express.

Even when we were working for different newspapers, Peping and I never lost touch. He and I both together in the regular Monday lunches of Plaridel. One week after a lunch at Plaridel, I received a phone call. It was Peping's daughter. Peping had collapsed at home and died in the hospital.

* * *

Adrian Cristobal I knew perhaps longer than his wife did. I first met him when I was a student of NVM Gonzalez. NVM taught writing at three universities: the University of Santo Tomas, University of the Philippines, and Philippine Women's University. He regularly invited his best students to night discussions at his home. Ever in Singalong, then at the UP campus. That was how the students met the writers. Some students came to know each other and became friends. Though Adrian never graduated from UP he hung around with the UP writers and became a member of the Kalinan, and that was how I came to know him.

Years later, when I was managing editor of The Evening News, one of my reporters told me about Adrian, the war painter and could I get him into the Evening News? At that time, our newspaper was in the middle of a campaign to attract more BPI/D house spot. I knew this involved a good writer, so I took him in as an editorial writer, because of the Evening News campaign, the house part was computerized and a better wage signed for which reason the newspaper was journalistic awards. Adrian was the smart for two editorial writing.

That gave Adrian a newfound career in journalism, and he never tried expanding than it was because I hired him in The Evening News. The rest is history. Adrian rose to become a publisher and columnist of several publications.

One week before he died, we visited him at the Makati Medical Center. A long-time heavy smoker, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. His wife, Angie and their sweet niece also visiting. He was also in cardiac distress so some his feeling tedious. When he saw me, he called me to his bedside. He asked me about dialysis. Is it painful? I then asked.

"Medyo it is one big deal," I told him. "It does what your kidneys can no longer do—cleanse your blood. It does in four hours what the kidneys do in 48. You have to undergo dialysis three times a week. After a few dialysis, you feel normal and you can do your thing."

"It is painful?" he asked again.

"Yes, it's painful, but only for a few seconds. It's like a virgin being deflowered," I joked. "It is painful only the first time and then it's not painful anymore."

Adrian laughed. He still had his sense of humor.

Two months later we dialyzed for the first time the next day and I think he dreamed it. But after not communication, his heart vanished.

It didn't save him, however. A week later, Adrian was dead.

Adrian Cristobal, writer

I COULDN'T HELP BUT CHUCKLE WHEN I saw Adrian Cristobal's picture last Sunday accompanying Jake Zulueta's article on him. I don't know if that was his favorite picture, but I've seen it so many times, one time in the newspaper when he used to write for it, to wonder if it wasn't on. The picture shows him in the throes of thought, a fist pressed to his chin a la Rodin's "The Thinker," his brow knitted in concentration, his expression just wasn't our decision.

I remembered that one of the factors I'd doubt would note if it was Dick Agrieved asked him once why he liked to scream in public when he laughed and the other was, perhaps, particularly in the company of friends with the use of liquor. Adrian replied, laughing, that the only way you could be taken seriously by the public was if your face was as in a frown. If you smiled a lot, you appeared to be a clown. Then, I speculate, he added, if you were so good looking as he.

"Require cynical poses, possibly acquired in the practice of journalism," Elmer Gridden assured him in newspapers. I'd disagree with the "cynical." Skeptical maybe, though cynical smacks slightly disillusioned maybe, but not cynical. I always thought Adrian was far too irreverent, unreligious, and mischievous to be cynical. I'm sure the mask of mockery was to barricade his more sensitive self. He was searching for a soft spot and all his life had been ripped off by friends and strangers who had a talent for telling it.

Adrian believed in our doing honestly, and that was enough.

The last time I saw him was exactly one month before he died last Saturday, a couple of days before I left for abroad. His daughter, Celine, had told me that Adrian's mind had progressively lost his hard grasp from long memory and I knew it was as shocked a much sentence as could be slapped on anyone, to go by friends who had gone away that way.

I was surprised to see him in good shape and in reasonably good spirits in his hospital room. He was downed book he was reading and I greeted me. "Best supper just for Christ of you to drop

Noel H. Cruz

As I See It

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

by," he said. "It was almost Yuletide, time of his visitors. He had quite received that day, closely related had been there earlier but had already gone. When he learned I was going to London, he asked me to get him a Times Literary Supplement diary calendar to jot his notes down on. He was old-school, confounding himself with literary accoutrements, the pen and ink-type mode of writing. He had the deluxe palate to go with his refined appetite.

Talk drifted to writing. He expressed envy for the times when scribes and intellectuals ruled the world and had the pleasure and excitement of one another's company. He wondered at some point why we couldn't have the courage to write about the most personal things about ourselves without fear of offending some people. The great writers had done so. Colin, who has inherited her father's irreverence, asked him why he hadn't yet written about that incident of his life. He smiled.

Before I left, the nurse came in to take his blood pressure, chiming, "How are we feeling?" Adrian replied with much belligerence that it wasn't a reasonable question to ask anyone who had to undergo dialysis three times a week. I giggled. That is how I will remember him, raging against the dying of the light in his own quiet and perfectly literary way.

He was satirical in the way that Ricky was satirical, because it started his compassion first, because he belonged to the same modern, urban lowers and mocking and sophistication means the world to the world. It's this time of year that you miss him most because he was the most generous in passing things that lasting himself spoken funny things in the celebrations in our fiestas. He wasn't shrill (a trade unfortunately in this era) but he was one to make people listen in a no-hear-drop), he was shy preferring to point out national foibles with an anti-nihilist. Alan, the rich and salutary were often his not just to be taken seriously, but to be taken seriously. I remember once that he offered Inday praise to some star (whose identity I have left secret, this is Christmas after all) in a column and ended up being thanked profusely by the fellow.

Adrian was a writer. Perhaps a lesser one than other favorite Filipino, Andres Bonifacio, called "The Tragedy of the Revolution," where he talked about the brilliance of the Katipunan having been founded by a plebeian such he toughened. Some of a society that was segregated by a class. That society included the revolutionaries who thought they were less led by someone with social distinction, like Emilio Aguinaldo. Adrian might have written his own epitaph there, though in a subtler and more witty.

He was tragedy wasn't that society was unprepared for him, it was that society had for interim incapable like Nilda Ingengke like Nilda Ingengke, Mary Jungco, Wilfredo Arellano, Danilo Fernandez, all of whom died in one fell swoop some years ago without grinding the world to a halt. Like Emily falling into the sea in Benguhel's painting, to a world oblivious to it. Inhumanness sure of the sea of living toward, a world that was not ready for them, that rejected and wanted the world to do as we are. Alas, in wrongly vainly. It's all the country can do now to love reading, let alone writing. It's all this country can do now to love people who write, let alone people who write well.

I don't know that Adrian ever became content or knew even it. My last look at him in that hospital bed suggests he never despaired to the thought. And I discovered that one of his favorite jokes was something a writer friend of his did during their youth. The fellow told the girl of his dreams, "I love you," and was promptly rejected. Undaunted, the guy said: "Who cares whether you love me or not? I'm just telling you I love you."

Maybe Adrian said that too, laughingly to him he wrote.

Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds

SHOCKING AS IT MAY BE TO OUR ENAMELED and well-anointed shepherd-key ears, a lamb in his arms before the manger of the Lord, the stinking, bathless shepherds of Bethlehem were a designed lot. True, they can be seen as representing the great unwashed of the Jewish people: Abrahamic and Isaac and Moses and Daniel, all of whom were shepherds. But by the time of Christ, shepherds, living as they did on the fields without water or perhaps the ritual ablutions of the rites, were seen as outside the law. Thus a scripture scholar writes that "Mangy, stinking, bathless shepherds are in their ritual uncleanness an encouragement for all who lack religious status."

So they were the very first to be called to worship the newborn king; there are are a hint of what it is to come in the Lord's epistle (to whom we are with gentleness and "decency" and understood). I have no reason to call the self-righteous but unlovely "brood of vipers."

Thus, I thrill on Christmas Eve at the Mass; name as enacted by the young people in one of our chapels as Pajonar Joseph and Mary (the latter hoary with child, making their way painfully along the road) asking for a room for the night. Everywhere they are turned away, and they are left behind the door and then sounding up with the Babe in her arms, carrying it to the baby as donors exhale and the chapel rings with songs of joy to the Lord.

I find it also so much in what takes place on Christmas Day, when those arms seeing people break into the garbage dump in the morning, bringing instructions for a Christmas party at the chapel to 300 scavengers who are to pour that day some such rites, for Christmas, to the abandoned, they are given a meal at the chapel. Food, stuff to be taken home to their families, a visit on the morning of Christmas, and a chance in their dark soul feast to small gangs. It suits with the

COMMENTARY

John J. Carroll, S.J.
John J. Carroll batting on Christ and found love.

"Magnificat," Our Lady's hymn of praise to God What takes care of the poor.

Many human cases out of this experience in the rural served them, some of the scavengers ask for plastic bags in order to take some of their own food home to their families. Last year, there were reports as to tainted one; a foreigner incident on supplying them were the persons of a young lady who bought the apples were too expensive and that the money could better be spent on milk or treatment. But when the apples were handed out, there were brutal strikes of approbation, they embodied that Christmas has really come, and perhaps also the encouragement of God in giving the lessons.

There are other stories as well. The regular church goers in the chapels were asked this year each to come home a can of canned beef or chicken, sausages to go with the pasta meal which would be handed out. Those occasions, a young boy came up after Mass and said, "I am of canned beef" we don't have enough money for this." But his sister chimed in, "Never mind, we will give the can of canned beef." A moment of mutual recrimination, saying that the poorest of the poor sometimes did not have the money to buy a can much, but they had joined what money they had, to make their contribution. And some of the cans of beef or sausage came gift wrapped! Shocked without the garbage of the scavengers of God.

There there is the prayer group of students, also in Payatas, who put on a Christmas party for their

Food finds and favorites

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE FEASTING HAS GIVEN YET, EVEN AS IN the time you read this, you might be suffering from indigestion or hangover and might be hankering for simple fare like guisang mongo bisaya. Study flavored with a bit of pork fat.

But this is also still the time to be giving people, and as a gift to readers out there, my family and I have decided share another listing of food finds that they might wish to stuff into their Christmas stocking, in spite of the overabundance.

First, the holiday staples. The Fruitcake has become a joke, with many maintaining that there is really only one fruitcake in the world—a just-got-surprised year after year. And, no! It's the "Fruitcake" Filipino, "Fruitcake" that's been around for more than 25 years ago when somebody gave one to Killer Manongdal of the Philippine Star, when I was still working there. I've never forgotten that one since, but understandably, Killer couldn't remember, where it had come from. There some people, I mumbled, open an envelope and it's food magazine, and found out that the fruitcake was an elaborate original Filipino "invention" Jollibee must have received one of the first fruitcakes produced of the first fruit swapping which is followed for the next 25 years.

I called up Blue Ribbon and ordered fruit cakes for my family and for gifting, and when told that each cost P500, I objected that the article had put the price at P300. "Oh, did you read the wrong issue," I was told. "It's P500 per cake, sir," I was told. "Sir, but got to update the price, but all right, you can have it at the old price." By the time it is Blue Ribbon are accommodating, as well as truthful!

Where we finally let into "Fruitcake Filipino," every mixed confided that I had just "never tasting since my initial revelry. A friend to whom we gave of which she overjoyed to on Christmas Eve, late at night that the fruitcake was terrible! Part of the shame is that you can really taste the fruit, and the fruit is preserved in the molasses-soaked "sticky" bright, pineapple, mangosteen, and even prunes.

The sad news is that I have lost track my copy of the recipe and the address of Rita Ilin in Pasay. So, if you e-mail me a note from now, I might have the data available for you!

* * *

HOME months ago, another after his early retirement, the hubby decided to give full rein to his culinary talents and decided to start a business offered at home, that incredible restaurant in Ilen Bacon Makati that we ate, swayed while keeping tight over an ailing brother in Makati Med.

Pat's culinary adventure at home was Chef Giorgio, who had countered with various Italian restaurants in town and taught Rafael cooking on the side. For eight Saturdays, Pat took lessons in pizza-making, pasta preparation and bread-making along with Amorsolo, Rafael, Pepper, Pat's sister-in-law. Pat's sister-in-law makes whose Italian lines mastered them to master Italian cuisine. He has since put the lessons to good use: those days as pizza, pasta and focaccia have become his standard repertoire at our Sangguniang Kabataan.

Embarrassingly, shortly after the lessons end, Giorgio left Amici when the Best Bocca Is Ours decided to sell it. Then just this month, Pat discovered that he had set up his own restaurant, Antico Nobile, at the Gateway Mall in Cubao. My two-years-free Pat's lessons were not wasted on cheap, crunchy pizza and large platters of pasta. The night of two tables occupied by Italian diners only boosted our confidence that we had chosen our restaurant well.

One note of caution: I was wondering if the restaurant would be playing that Italian dance "Volare" and discovered that it played nothing but the song...in all its possible variations—on the sound system. A real danger is leaving the restaurant with CD or "Love song syndrome," with "Volare" impossible to exorcise from your brain for the next few hours.

* * *

BECAUSE we've been spending so many weekends in Tagaytay and nearby Alfonso, where "Starter Home" Preparations for "Retired Home"), our weekend residence, is located, we've learned to distinguish "restaurateurs" of the near-by in the area.

We've long been regulars of Sonyo's, both of the garden restaurant and the food and breakfast, her home diner. Sonya Garcia, our friend who's largely responsible for having Tagaytay back in trend), dominicana, has decided to expand her menu. For weddings, she says, couples can now choose either her standard menu of salad, bread and dips, and pasta (supplemented by roast chicken or pinakbet entrees), or her "Filipino" menu (designed by her "gang of chefs," for her "pansit-lo," lechon even by her former driver-turned-chef "adobo," bistay dun others rich, moist chocolate cake, yummy cheese bagas (her best seller, she says), crisp, buttery Ox...cap. Her wedding packages are affordable and even excellent home-made pasta lasagna.

Some years back, I wrote about Rose Garden, the restaurant owned by our good friends Linda and Mark Flores, at the Cliff House complex. We wanted to have a lunch in Manila, at the Pine Grill building along Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong. One morning some months back, Pat and I dropped-in-drop by Gourmet breakfast before heading out way to interview Meng. We noticed rumblings of the typical "Rose Garden" in a corner of the building, the site of many wedding proposals, we were told, and while Ing slowly crept up the steps and discovered as marriage on, we learned on eggs benedict, pancakes and bun chicken, washed down with the best coffee in town. It was a wonderful relaxing and hunting in the chilly air and relishing in our decision to locate, at least just this, in this restaurant on our list.

* * *

Comments are welcome at rmjimenez@inquirer.com.ph

After the feast

LOOKING BACK

Jurdeth B. Gervacio

THIS EARLY, I'M PLANNING A POST-FEAST that and post. Now that's the party for Nordeche some more of the parties I attended this season were either crammed to weed and, of course, family it is always nice to get friends together and share yet another festive meal, as if we have not enjoyed quite a lot this month. Our wonders though how simple or elaborate the post-Christmas party should be. If people placed a lot at the top of their list of New Year's resolutions, does I really need to gain a few more pounds?

For many in a community conditioned (as to look forward to the numerous feasts in the Church calendar that may be excuse to dispense with the silence that normally accompanied meals. One can almost hear the clinking of glasses and the noise coming from the kitchen as people busily prepare their "special food" and prepared—morning noon, night and cubo-loading—particularly welcome after the Holy Week fasting. On the eve of Easter Sunday, after saying grace, the silent would then be broken as everyone starts to eat. Conversations are just in time for lunch," then seven more spread with the addition of two "Silvirian," because they are chosen from the 40 day Lenten fasting. In this, the community would right "free gluttony." Thanks to Pope Gregory the Great, Catholic festivities was the signal for talk and laughter. Dishes would mingle with the rubbing of glasses and flowers, and everyone was feasted their recipes a few grandly made of which are are blessed every Sunday in anticipation of a memorable meal.

Perhaps it is the arrangement or the freshness with which I look back to an earlier phase in my complicated life, but during silent meals meals made minimal noise with utensils. The silence could be so striking that one would be hard-pressed to answer the question if one audible has broke the peace. Once it was just the hot like sound from a near-empty mashed bottle being moved to munch a third piece of meat that brought the house down.

Comments are welcome at jurdeth@yahoo.com

A gift to the world

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTED overwhelmingly last week in favor of a resolution calling for a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The Philippines played an important role in that resolution, yet that news didn't seem to have made it into local media. I learned about it through the internet edition of the National Catholic Reporter (NCR), an American weekly paper.

NCR had reason to feature the resolution, which was co-authored by 13 countries: Albania, Angola, Brazil, Croatia, Gabon, Mexico, New Zealand, the Philippines, Portugal and San Marino. Interestingly, John Allen noted that eight of these countries have Catholic majorities. He didn't name them, but I thought it'd be useful if I took a list of countries ruled by the two countries without Catholic majorities: Guatemala and New Zealand.

Allen's column focused on the Catholic influence behind the moratorium, truly although not a co-author of the resolution, has been ceaselessly anti-death penalty and played a strong diplomatic role behind the resolution. Besides Amnesty International, the leading anti-death penalty group, called Community of Sant'Egidio, was active in pushing for a UN resolution.

There's reason for the Philippines to be proud about this victory at the UN. Besides re-anchoring the resolution, the Philippines also played a key role in getting it from being voted down. During the deliberations in the committee, Japan proposed an amendment considerably weaker than the anti-death penalty resolution. It was clearly a discriminatory move because many countries oppose the death penalty but not necessarily abortion. The Philippines and the Vatican (which has 180 observer-nation) movement, saying they would support a separate anti-abortion resolution, but did not want to be abortion more so to "fast-institutionalized" by being attached to an anti-death penalty position.

Allen says this move saved the resolution. In the end, 104 countries voted in favor while 54 opposed the resolution. There were also 29 abstentions. Some of the countries that opposed or abstained the resolution were the United States, China, Iran, Sudan, Singapore, several Muslim countries and, curiously, a few of small Caribbean countries.

Cultural differences

It was not the first time such a resolution was filed with the UN. In 1994 and 1999, similar resolutions were filed to abolish the death penalty but were voted down. This time around, however, international mood the increase in the number of countries that had abolished capital punishment as proof of changing world opinion. The Philippines was, in fact, among the first countries to abolish the death penalty in 1987, restored it in 1993, only to abolish it again in 2006. The UN resolution also urges nations not to enforce the death penalty once they have abolished it.

The debates in the UN were heated, with opposing countries making arguing that such a resolution infringed on national sovereignty.

Most European countries have abolished the death penalty; in fact, one of the requirements for membership in the European Union is that they do not use capital punishment. The example of the EU shows how quickly it changed by history and culture. In the past, there have been many Europeans going back to Christ's teachings about charity and forgiveness.

This while Christianity laid the foundations for an anti-capital punishment ethos, Christians and Christian nations were often quite reluctant to the last 2,000 years, emphasizing some of the more medieval forms of capital punishment against heretics, infidels and, well, anyone who dared oppose church authority.

It was Western secular liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights, that eventually eroded and with early Christian teachings to repudiate the claims and capital punishment were made by the state. The movement in Europe was initially slow. In 1870, there were only 17 countries that had abolished the death penalty, mainly in the West. Today, there are 90 abolitionist countries from all the continents, with another 46 classified as "de facto abolitionist" because they have not executed anyone in more than 10 years.

Sadly, the United States is the only abolitionist in a global division. In Supreme Court suspended executions in 1971, but capital punishment was again allowed starting in 1976. Today, many American states no longer use capital punishment, but there are more than one state liberally. Texas, for example, has executed 405 people since December 1976.

China leads the world with more than 3,000 executions this year. It not communism behind this insistence on capital punishment but a Confucian legalist view, with its view of human as inherently weak, and therefore to be controlled through laws and rules. It's not surprising that Singapore, with its strong Confucian orientation, also clings on capital punishment and actually has the highest number of executions in relation to population.

Most Muslim countries have capital punishment, but in many law allows payment of "blood money" where the offender can avoid the death penalty by the family of the victim. If the money is accepted, the offender can be saved from execution.

Christ

Abolitionists that US resolutions often have little effect, but in this issue, it does matter. It's a moral issue that transcends borders and "renders the mission of those many who now flock to our people in dutch to boast a bit more critical saving."

Where are still had the death penalty, I argued that for as long as we used capital punishment we couldn't argue against Filipinos being executed by other governments. Today, with the UN resolution, we can argue with the US Government internally resolution, we stand on higher moral ground when we try to save Filipinos overseas who have been sentenced to death.

This is not a small matter. This year alone, governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran executed 143 Filipinos, many of them in the Middle East, or over 30 Filipinos each executed. The Department of Foreign Affairs is still monitoring another 53 cases of overseas Filipinos sentenced to death.

The arguments against the death penalty have often many on justice, particularly the possibility of wrongful convictions. Given the state of the Philippine justice with inefficient and corrupt police, that risk has always been very real, with left guilty often handed its sentenced.

Still another reason is that the death penalty can be used against political opponents. The current president with an in the 20 Opposition there without the death penalty, the Philippine government has been implicated in many disappearances and extrajudicial executions of political dissidents.

It's been pointed out that China was a political prisoner, too, and a victim of capital punishment. In that light, the UN resolution was in a way an appropriate Christmas gift to the world.

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The nation's real problem

LETTERS

WHAT COURAGEOUS QUINOS MOTTO (letter, column "Opinion/Internet", December 12/17/07) is the mind-boggling spectacle not just of a government that has attained unprecedented levels of evil, but also a citizenry that is oblivious to average governance business preferred, religious leaders and the Intelligentsia whom for hostile chastisery do not squeeze out of their own system.

Dr. Quino is right to say that it's not just this government that is dysfunctional, this whole country is, that is why I say change is so to genuinely solutized, there we or a people cause change our attitudes and accept personal responsibility for corruption.

This theme we going is to continue even if it means wasting it long time. This means not cheating in personal tax obligations. This means obeying traffic rules even when everybody is violating them. This means not patronizing gambling in any form because it destroys our value system. The means a whole lot of self sacrifice for the sake of righteousness. This means a kind of moral and spiritual renewal that can be achieved by a mass movement of personal decisions to rebel a light.

No, we are a dysfunctional nation because we cannot go beyond the superficial cause of our societal problems. The institutions we realize that we ourselves are to blame: then we can go ahead with our lives as a better nation because we'll have no excuses but to correct our ways.

—ELIX CORE,
gamoia@yahoo.com

Revolution from within will make People Power unnecessary

IT'S CLEAR AS THE BLUE SKIES ABOVE that, at this age and time, People Power revolt has clearly entered death, that it is now a thing of the past, that the Filipino is either sick and tired of it or just too old for it.

Bringing down an establishment, or a government for that matter, will need nonviolent, like Ghandi did into the lifestyle and mind-set of today's generation.

The call to topple the government must touch and move all classes of people. That call must be—or at least sound—fervent, original and full of enthusiasm. It should excite the mindless and inspire spontaneous action. Spontaneity is the element and the prime motor of People Power.

Catch phrases like "moral obligation," "Diktic mulgis," cries of whipped-out mobs a show of guns and bullets, are stale and worn out. Worse, if the watchers are paid or still to be paid. But for more businessmen the public to the sight of property destroyed, like what happened at the Peninsula.

We can a peace-loving people, to gyrate without saying that our country needs reforms and changes. The people in government and out of it should heed the call of conscience for a revolution from within.

—LUCKIES IBED SANTOS,
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Cruz had economy's real problems wrong

REAL CRUZ IS "MAKING A LOT OF THINGS for granted, but I agree that the Philippine economy and the poor aren't as strong as President Macapagal-Arroyo would like the public to believe.

Cruz wrote (Inquirer, 12/12/07): "Private sector stock losses during the administrations of Presidents Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Joseph Estrada—even that of Fidel Ramos. And ... don't misunderstand me on that one because I am also very, very wealthy and hate what we grow and the life that we enjoy. In fact, home grown agricultural products and domestic fish are relatively expensive than imported ones. Which means the Arroyo administration patent even makes our agricultural output."

The price of oil affects everything. Manila's Cow Palace oil affects the cost of painting chemicals for fabrics, transporting of fertilizers and food, running malls, lifting cars. I could go on and on. But the point is, oil is used almost in all economic activities and its effects in life are just in the pump.

Cruz said: "If we farmers learned anything, in the school of economics, it should have been that in a nation with a healthy economy, everybody would be prosperous, then would be no poor people."

No sane economist would make such a promise! Ask Carlos Dalisay. There will always be some unemployed and poor people. The economy is a dynamic thing and you can become obscene overnight with the creation of new jobs. It already blew up the economic theory of Neo-Ascetician-ing Jefferson Rate of Unemployment which states that full employment cannot be achieved if unemployment is above zero rate (the only people who are employed earn a thing and, so the theory kind has failed to accomplish even half the living standard of a capitalist economy.

Before Cruz criticizes Gloria she always for being a bad economist, he should first study economics. Then he would realize that the Arroyo and planning years of the things the Inquirer hasn't been very much of a success. For example, 99 percent of economists are for free trade. But she cannot fully practice it ... unilaterally or multilaterally ...because of politics and because it is unpopular. There are a lot of economic constraints, and Cruz's ranting does not help us focus on the real problems of the economy.

—MARK SILVA,
36 Mauliola St., Antipolo Heights,
Hillcrest, Quezon City

Good guys in jail, bad guys in office

REBELS ARE MADE, NOT BORN. THEY ARE shaped by injustice and oppression, and the failure to treat by the denial of their appeal for justice. This is made clear by the American Declaration of Independence which explains why a nation decided to rebel against its government. The Declaration begins with the affirmation that "All men are created equal ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

It asserted that "Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to subject them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

The signers of the Declaration asserted that "In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim graduated from the Philippine Military Academy, an honored institution where the ideals of patriotism and country foremost are cast of iron and a gentleman is molded into its students, to paraphrase Trillanes and his Oakwood comrades followed the path undertaken by the signers of the Declaration by first petitioning for presidential and the soldiers in the battalions of various body services, among them, good shoes, adequate food rations and quick medical aid in case of injuries. They also exposed and pinpointed an end to hostilities allegedly perpetrated by military agents.

When their complaints were ignored, they were brought to their commander in chief and there are a ringing rebuff. To whom else would they go, except straight to the sovereign people? Trillanes could have taken the easy path, donned his eyes to the neglect and abuses of the government, and wormed his way up to the top to be rewarded with standards and high positions. Instead he chose the path that the signers of the Declaration took. His attempt to the Senate showed that a great number of his fellow citizens did not disapprove of his action.

Now Trillanes and his like-minded comrades are in prison. The good guys are in jail, and the bad guys (in the minds of many) are in office. Former Vice President Teofisto Guingona, a vocal fighter against despotism and corruption, and former SP president Francisco Tatad, also an uncompromising fighter for justice, are under indictment. What lessons do these teach the young?

—MANUELE ALMARIO,
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Eddie Ilarde pushed first for 'Maharlika'

MAKATI: JIMMY EMMANUEL ESMEE WEBB in said in his letter (Inquirer, 11/26/07) that it was former First Lady Imelda Marcos who suggested that our country's name be changed to "Maharlika."

For the record, it was former congressman-senator Eddie Ilarde who made that suggestion.

—PAUL E. BENITEZ,
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Across the NATION

AFP vows to paralyze NPA in Samar

CPP salutes NPA raiders

LUZONA CITY—THE COMmunist Party of the Philippines (CPP) congratulated Monday the New People's Army (NPA) rebels for their successful raid on the Mayorga Municipal Police Office in Samar province Saturday.

"The tactical offensive shows the determination and capability of the revolutionary forces to defeat the reactionary regime's counter-revolutionary war of terror and push forward the people's war," CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal said in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

He claimed that the successful raid added flavor to the people and their revolution's history celebration of the 39th anniversary of the CPP, who is Ka Joma.

Rosal said the communist rebels really overpowered the policemen on guard and overran the station.

Citing initial reports from the rebel forces who conducted the raid, he said the rebels seized some M-16 and one M-14 rifles, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and other weapons.

Rosal said a militiaman was also killed in the firefight.

He identified the man as Pedro Abadiano, who was at the station visiting his police cousin on when the guerrillas struck.

The casualty was reported by a human member of the Citizens Armed Forces Geographical Unit.

A report said the communist rebels raided the armory of government relatives, mainly by setting up a blockade on both ends of the entire town, while the Hinabangan town hall, where the police office was located.

Braggadocio

The rebels, reportedly led by a "Ka Ruby" and "Ka Hernan," fled on foot after the attack.

Rosal said the Hinabangan raid "exposes as nothing but braggadocio" the AFP's Armed Forces of the Philippines claim of wiping out the NPA in Eastern Visayas this year."

On Sunday, the CPP-NPA declared a unilateral cessation on Dec. 24-25 and on Dec. 31-Jan. 1.

However, Rosal made it clear the order to unilaterally cease offensive against government forces remained in force during the four-day ceasefire. —**Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon**

By Jhonson Hapalicao
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE ARMED FORCES OF the Philippines Central Command (Centcom) has vowed to decisively neutralize an undetermined number of New People's Army rebels operating in southern Cebu province before the end of the year.

About a hundred alleged members of the NPA attacked the police station in the town hall in Hinabangan about 5 a.m. Sunday. A civilian died during the exchange of gunfire that lasted for about an hour.

AFP Centcom spokesperson Lt. Col. Jefferson Dimaculan said the military would not commit its operations in Samar by January.

"They are taking advantage of the Christmas holidays. But we could not afford to just let the incident pass. Possibly rebels would go on, and whenever they are there, it may spark an encounter," Dimaculan said.

Dimaculan admitted that Samar is the easy province in the Visayas to release the NPA remaining strong positions.

He said the military would focus on pursuing the NPA operations there.

Dimaculan said Centcom commanding general Victor Ibrado yesterday issued an order to all the military headquarters in the Visayas to be vigilant.

Dimaculan said the NPA usually conduct operations during the AFP's travelling unnecessary on Dec. 26.

The guerrilla group would take advantage of the ongoing suspension of military operations, he pointed out.

Omnacious said military or police headquarters, which are key to security, would be the most likely targets.

Central Mindanao police director Chief Supt. Ronald Bodrero also ordered a reinforcement to all city and provincial directors in the region to strengthen their security and to refulfill an advisory contained post to provide early warning for any NPA attack.

Bodrero said intelligence gathering should also be strengthened to avoid using for unrelated to any happening.

The PRO 7 police have to no heightened alert status because of the Christmas holidays.

Roundup

Cagayan town councilor shot dead

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A councilor in the coastal town of Buguey in Cagayan was shot dead in front of the Catholic church in the town after attending Mass on Christmas Eve, police said.

Cagayan police director Senior Supt. Adelfo Wilson Santos said Councilor Roman Mondejar was walking toward the concealed torture of the church at 11:30 p.m. when a man approached and shot him on the head.

Santos said Mondejar's wife and three children were with him during the attack but they were not hurt.

He said the police were looking at politics as a possible motive in the slaying of Mondejar, who placed eighth in the council election in the town on May 14. —**Vilmarie Hoopo Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon**

Girl killed by stray bullet

CEBU CITY—A 10-year-old girl in Mandaue City was killed by a stray bullet on Christmas Eve, while 16 persons, most of them residents of Cebu, are reported to be in Mandaue Medic.

Sharon Ann Manuarte of Looc, Mandaue City was walking toward her house when she suddenly fell to the ground at 8:30 p.m. on Monday.

PO2 Modesto Gerondia of the Mandaue City Police Office said the police had a fully-determine attachment of bullet to Mandaue's self-owned .45 caliber pistol, which was recovered by the police but later transferred to Don Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center (DVSMMC). Mandaue police spokesperson Remy Rimpapa said the bullet was still under observation at the emergency room (ER) at DVSMMC.

The Regional Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit (RESU) was recorded 78 victims of firecracker blasts, according to RESU personnel Noel Gaco, much very much lower than last year's figure. —**Jay A. Gabieta, Carla P. Gomez and Jhonson Hapalicao, Inquirer Visayas**

Marijuana plants uprooted

CAMP SIKIHOG, Benguet—Police on Monday uprooted more than 10,000 marijuana plants, worth at least P3.24 million, in plantations in Kapangan town.

Police Drug Enforcement Unit (PDEU) director Supt. Agerico Ricardo Viray said the plantations in Sitio Ma-o and Sitio Tuyakan in the village Tuguilis at 5 a.m.

No suspect or plantation caretaker was arrested during the raid. —**Inquirer Northern Luzon**

2 suspected rebels slain

COTABATO CITY—Two suspected communist guerrilla were killed on the day, the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) marked the 22-day birthday in our offered by the government.

Supt. Teng Bacao, Indian Kudarat provincial police director, said a soldier was also wounded in the 30-minute firefight between antifascism and New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Columbio town on Dec. 17.

Bacao said the militiamen were conducting foot patrol when they chanced upon the clashes ensued in order to check the boundary between Columbio and Barangay Kalbay in Isulan town.

Bacao said the rebels left behind their two dead comrades and two weapons as they fled towards the forested portion of Barangay Sir. —**Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao**

2 dead, 3 hurt in road mishap

LUCBAN CITY—Two persons died and three others injured when an Isuzu elf truck and a motorcycle collided with a taxi traveling along Quezon Highway in Tagkawayan, Quezon Monday afternoon.

Insp. Genaro Isaac Dalisay, Tagkawayan Municipal Police Office chief, identified the victims as Ferdie Romero, 37, driver of the JLD vehicle, and Lilanie Ibalaya, 34, both residents of Tayabo, Rizal.

A driver Lucel Bail Galabaal (4 p.m. a PB Bus Lines driver by one Raymundo Pedro was traveling in Barangay San Francisco when it collided head-on with the opposing Hino MPI.

The victims died on the spot. Two other passengers of the MPI vehicle suffered serious injuries and were rushed to the nearest hospital where they were still recuperating.

—**Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon**

Baguio's street kids ask: Is Santa for real?

BAGUIO CITY—STREET CHILDREN HERE spent Christmas Eve trying to sell gift wrappers and gift bags along downtown Baguio.

On Christmas morning, they went to sell their remaining presents to Santa Claus here still.

"Santa" a former Councilor Marcos Pedilla, who has spent Christmas most nights giving out candies along downtown Baguio since the 1970s.

He gently reminded the children he selected—many of them children of Marcos Fok who migrated to Baguio—that gifts have already been opened on Christmas Eve, so no one will buy their products.

But he led others—told into asking, "Is Santa this real?"

Pedilla ended up rightening Santa Claus' role in the Christmas celebration as other Muslim children began to convert considerations.

Their presence there was a sign that Christmas, while a Christian tradition, does belong to all children, Pedilla later told the Inquirer.

It was the first time he engaged Muslims in a discussion about the legend of Santa Claus or Saint Nicholas.

Muslim children

Some Muslim families here often discourage these children's interest in Santa Claus because of the town's Christian connection, said a Muslim businesswoman.

She points to the widely circulated—would not rebuke discourse Santa in exchange for "what Muslim Survival Guide to Christmas."

It said: "Santa Claus (a German translation of St. Nicholas) was associated after St. Nicholas, bishop of Myra (7,000 years ago) a man of kindness, generosity and compassion. It was only in the last few hundred years that Santa Claus was associated with the Christian holiday of Christmas that celebrates the birthday of Prophet Jesus."

The Muslim children, however, told Pedilla they believed there is a real Santa because everyone believes in story.

"You're Santa real because everyone believes that is real? All the gift wrappers we are selling from your business," a Muslim boy said.

They said Pedilla should buy all of their wrappers to his surprise.

Pedilla laughed at the children's logic.

"There are lots of Santas. There are also Santas in other countries. I am the Santa of Baguio," he said.

The Muslim children did not leave Pedilla's side as he walked along Session Road to meet families leaving the Baguio cathedral after attending Christmas Mass.

"It's hard not to see the relevance of this occasion. If Muslims are interested to learn, then the concept of charity prevails among the most generous. Santa stands for unity anywhere," he said.

Pedilla runs the annual "Globin ng Pinko" project in the city, and the dwindling volume of Yuletide donors suggests that charity is no longer a priority for others, he said.

"I don't blame them. Running money has become hard even for big companies. Texas Instruments still finances Globin ng Pinko projects for children [with disabilities], but many of my multinational donors have to move to spices," Pedilla said.

Pedilla later visited a tales desk, Josephine Court, who gave birth to her "Christmas baby," Jesper Sharon, at the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center.

He brought stuffed toys and candy to 66 children confined at the hospital.

Some of the children had been crying all night, a nurse said, but they brightened up when Pedilla showed up.

"If many people say [playing Santa] is a thankless job, let them come still one to see these children, and they'll learn how senseless it truly is," he said. Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon

SANTA CLAUS brings toys to children at the Baguio General Hospital, which is taking care of ill children. —VINCENT CABREZA

Christmas traditions alive in Pampanga town

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

MABALACAT, PAMPANGA—A MIX OF light, bursting brightly from 224 lanterns hoisted on poles, swamped the church grounds here on Christmas Eve as families in 14 of this town's 27 villages kept alive the traditions of the solemn (former) processions) and the exciting (convergence of lights).

Like in the dying art of the parol-making (arts lessons that are still using here during the month of September), the "Giant Lantern Festival Grand Competition" could not kill the origins of the two practices.

Yes, grew up witnessing it," Gonzalez told the Inquirer as she waited for the arrival of the choices.

As here it has been done here for decades now, with lighters, a synergism of the word motions, is a procession held in honor of the village's patron saint.

That procession, she said, is incomplete when the multicolored lamps of nature's love are not illuminated by a set of 14 lanterns.

The lanterns are arranged this way: A cross-shaped one heads the arch. Behind it are two cone-like-shaped ones. Then two rows of star-shaped lanterns, six on each side accompanies the image, which is either on (male) (shoulder-borne carriage) or on a carroza (motorized carriage). Behind the carriage is a star-shaped lantern that is bigger than the rest.

A choir singing the "Tilaw ni Salve" accompanies the faithful as they go on foot around the community. Its Latin lyrics are prescribed by the parish's liturgy committee.

"The rest of the song should be easily followed ... because the meaning and its manner will be another," the committee advised in a set of rules it issued for the event.

"It used to be that the lanterns were lighted only by candles or gas lamps," Gonzalez said.

Convergence

After World War II, the lanterns have been lit up either by a car battery or a generator set, she said.

The villages that continue with the processions are Dolores, Concepcion, Atlu-Bola, Mangalit, Sto. Ilaro, Aguila, Sta. Maria, San Francisco, Sta. Maria Magdalena, San Fernando, San Joaquin, Mamatitang, Poblacion and Lourdes. These are located around the church compound.

Confined within the villages from Dec. 16 to 23, all the processions converge at the grounds of the Our Lady of Helen Shrine Parish early p.m. of Dec. 24.

The lanterns then go around the processional route at the town proper.

They all head back to the church an hour later for the Misang Matinee (Christmas midnight Mass), in which a full repertoire of the pamanchic, which include the "Cardo," is sung not by one but three choirs of 10 singers.

Then the climax is called "matitmot," "mapitan" or "matitmot." It might have been derived from the word "matit" or dawn prayers.

"Matitmot is the culmination of the musician labores. The two go together," said Bobby Tantingco, a resident of Mabalacat and executive director of the Holy Angel University Center for Kapampangan Studies here.

Laborers and residents say because to be at work time in Magalang, Angeles City, San Fernando and Mexico in Pampanga and in Concepcion, Tarlac.

That night in Mabalacat might well be a famous festival of sorts, but out of the midst of the chaos in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga southern part, where the numerous 19 feet in diameter and fitted with 2,000 to 6,000 bulbs.

What Mabalacaqueños hold that night over numerous that were twice the size of a regular neighborhood. These were either made of plastic or threads, capiz (seashell) and Japanese paper. Some looks off from the star design, using several wreaths as motif instead. Some of them had rods, which lanterns in Angeles City have.

SMC's SUMILAO PROPERTY IS A DEVELOPED AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, NOT RAW FARM LAND, OPERATIONAL BY JANUARY 2008

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San Miguel Foods, Inc.'s (SMFI) P2.4 billion agro-industrial estate will create thousands of jobs not only in Sumilao but the entire Bukidnon Province.

- The project will generate employment for 2,400 workers and the facility will require 400 employees with an annual payroll of approximately P50 million;
- By partnering with SMFI, the farmers of Bukidnon will have access to farm inputs, financing and technology which will improve farm productivity and guarantee better farm-gate pricing;
- Local government tax revenues will increase 30-fold when the project is fully operational. From P3 million in annual tax collection, SMFI will pay P98 million annually in taxes, allowing government to improve the delivery of education, health, housing and other basic services.

As the current owners of the Sumilao property, we question the legal standing of the protesting farmers.

- A number of the farmers are already Agrarian Reform beneficiaries, having received at least 66 hectares of neighboring land. This nullifies their eligibility to lay further claim to the Sumilao property.
- In fact, the Supreme Court in 1998 noted the absence of tenants on the property, which means none of the farmers have any tenancy rights.

Bukidnon has thousands of hectares of idle Government land in the neighboring area that can be distributed to the farmers. Why jeopardize this major rural development project that is very nearly operational and stands to bring immeasurable benefit and progress to the people of Bukidnon?

We trust in the fairness of the public to see the facts for what they are.

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

BOATS await passengers at Quezon Island, one of the most popular destinations at the Hundred Islands National Park in Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

Interconnected Hundred Islands seen

By Yolanda Sarmiento-Fuertes
Alaminos City

TO ATTRACT MORE TOURISTS to the Hundred Islands National Park (HINP), the city government of Alaminos in Pangasinan has decided to embark on an ambitious project to link these islets on the Lingayen Gulf through a network of transparent underwater tubes.

Visitors can walk through these underwater "bridges" to view various species of fish, corals and marine creatures in their natural environment.

The "bridges" are part of the Hundred Islands Underwater Marine Park project that envisions the establishment in the area of fish sanctuaries, snorkeling and diving areas, a facility for water sports, and a marine institute where experts can study the biodiversity of the Lingayen Gulf.

"It is a grandiose plan. But it is a highly feasible [project] and is actually a part of the comprehensive development master plan of the city," says Mayor Hernani Resuma.

The plan, prepared by the Palafox Associates, an internationally recognized firm engaged in architectural design, urban planning and consultancy, involves a development blueprint for Alaminos as a major player in the environmentally and tourism-geared of Pangasinan and the Ilocos.

"The plans are ready. What we just need are the resources," he said.

He admits that the city's plans for the HINP are "big" but the effort and possible investments that would go to it would be worth every sweat and centavo as the park is the country's first national park and the top tourist attraction of Alaminos and Pangasinan.

Even in its "untouched" state, the park already draws about 130,000 visitors yearly, Resuma says.

The park offers scenic white beaches, dive spots, caves and bird reservation.

"A wide variety of fish abounds in the waters. They have multiplied but after we put a stop to illegal fishing activities there," Resuma says.

The coral beds, stained from destructive fishing, are recovering, too. The University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute maintains a giant clam (Tridacna gigas, locally known as taklobo) farm in the area. The clam survivors are sensing ground for various species of fish.

The city cannot actually introduce heavy development in the islands because under the National Integrated Protected Areas (Nipas) Act, the city has to protect and conserve this natural spot, says Basil Sibonavan, city planning officer.

The tourism plan groups the islands into three categories: The "exclusive islands," intended for those who want to have privacy and try scuba diving and snorkeling; the "exploration islands," for tourists who are into adventure and extreme sports such as rappelling, parasailing, kayaking and trekking; and the "everyday islands," for families and groups who want to go swimming, snorkeling, trekking, and bird and boat watching.

"The underwater bridges project is the ultimate [goal]. It will justify all the other infrastructure requirements of the area such as the airport, a seaport, a highway, shopping malls and others. It will jumpstart the city's development," Resuma says.

The city's master plan does not involve only on the HINP but on the entire city based on its geographical characteristics and investment potentials.

With this, the city would be divided into four clusters, Resuma says.

While development for the Hundred Islands (Cluster 1) is assured, the proposed development for Cluster 2, which includes the Bolo Beach, is bigger.

The proposed projects there include resort and hotel development, ecotourism, hotel, leisure development, health and fun, river parks, amusement forest, golf course and an equestrian village.

The horseshoe-shaped Bolo Beach, with its shallow waters, offers a perfect getaway for vacationers and is actually an alternative to the long-wharf sea jump-off points to the islands.

The tourism plan's Cluster 3 is called the "Heritage Walk Zone," which offers a tour of the "Old Town"—the church, town plaza, ancestral houses, museums, the Bolo-a-Dasay, salt farms and rivers. Cluster 4 is the "countryside farming zone" while Cluster 5 is the "business park zone."

"The master plan is designed to make Alaminos a 'green city' ... Investors, big and small, are welcome to do business in the city," says Resuma, who sponsored for its crisscrossed highland hill suburbs the representation of Pangasinan's first district in the House of Representatives in 2001.

But he says only light industries, tourism-related facilities and those that draw strength from the rich agriculture and fishery resources of the city are welcomed.

While tourism is the primary focus of the master plan, its other goals include a fully developed agriculture, adequate and high-ly modernized physical infrastructure and facilities, availability of modern education, accessible health facilities, well-protected and rehabilitated natural resources and assured public safety and peace and order.

All it takes for Alaminos' master plan to take off is an international airport, Resuma says.

The entire western Pangasinan, which has potential tourism and commercial areas, will benefit once an airport is built there, he adds.

Pangasinan's major urban centers in accessible by land transportation, travel time from the different airports like the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) in Manila), Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (Pampanga) and the San Fernando City Airport (La Union) is "quite long and tiring."

"We want to travel by three or six hours by land to get to the islands? With an airport, tourists from other countries can fly direct to the city," he says.

Pangasinan welcomes President Macapagal-Arroyo's endorsement of a commercial airport project in her State of the Nation Address in July.

"This has been a long dream of Alaminos and Pangasinan that will soon become a reality. It will make the province accessible to businessmen and tourists, and hopefully, it can accommodate cargo planes for Pangasinan to export its agricultural resources," he says.

THE WATERS around the Hundred Islands attract snorkelers and divers.

'It is a grandiose plan. But it is a highly feasible [project] and is actually a part of the comprehensive development master plan of the city'

Living, working with the Aeta

By Tonette Orejas
Pérez, Mariveles

TO CONTINUE LIVing and working with the Aeta in Porac, Pampanga, is the gift Fr. Reginel "Ching" Fuertes is giving to himself this Christmas.

It is in the mountain ranges of Porac and with some 2,000 indigenous people that he has "grown in faith with" in the last two years since May 2004, said the 43-year-old former diabetic who was calling on the priest-ly vocation since his childhood.

"I like it here. It is my third Christmas here. The people teach me that while they live simple lives, they still try to be happy," said Fuertes, the only priest in the Archdiocese of San Fernando who is assigned to the province's Aeta mountain folk.

His mission is based in the Holy Family Parish in Sitio Mapalad in Mariz resettlement. Also Mabanglad in Arail, about 20 km west of Mt. Pinatubo. The archdiocese's Social Action Center of Pampanga helps him out in nearby Sapang Uwak. (Another Pampangan priest, Fr. Henry Agustin, works with the Aeta in Botolan's Mt. Mahomiso.)

"They show their faith through work and through family life," he said during a break in the rehearsal of the Christmas play of young Aeta last week.

At the chapel run by nuns, Fuertes, the children, accompanied by Fuertes on the guitar, sang their hear at the Xmas celebration by Archbishop Paciano Aniceto.

Like in past Christmas blunders, this one was followed by a hearty chuckle. Another has not failed to give in the last 15 years. The community shared lunch of pansit, sapin, torta, adapa, lanzones and papaya.

The lanky, personable smiling priest arrived in Porac to succeed the friar of the Aeta who do not speak Tagalog or English.

FR. REGINEL "Ching" Fuertes has chosen to live and work with the Aeta.

Fuertes said he was "totally confused strangers. The elders kissed his hand. The young ones called up to him, as those hanging out to his legs. Older women gave him baskets of lanzones and papaya grown in their small (mountain) plots.

And he's been in what they like. At the end of the Mass, he sang a folk version of "Sometimes When We Touch," a hit in the 1980s. A folk singer to Quiapo town gave that as Expompangan tribute.

The local version is known around here as "O Jo, Kalagayan da ku (O sir, I love you)." Playing to a delighted audience, Fuertes earned loud applause.

In preaching, he said he respects their regard for nipa-tinalipat, not putting that deep in conflict with Catholic beliefs.

Calling

How he got here is both by force of circumstance and calling. Msgr. Felipe Pamplíron, Jr., and presiding here for almost 20 years, suffered a stroke and Fuertes had to take over.

Months before that though, he said the "small voice" that had been guiding him in periods of discernment, told him to head for the "mountains."

"So here I was," he said.

Prior, his third assignment after being a university chaplain and parish priest of the Barangay district of Malolos in Guimaras town, was by far by far-flung, trekking, and bird and boat watching.

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Sad turns

In all these sad turns, he said, "God must have another plan for me."

He decided to return to the Philippines in late 1993, giving up his priest status to "discern what God wants me to do."

"I was laughing at myself as I surrendered the priest card," he said, thinking himself to be a fool because the queue for visa applicants that day was, as usual, long.

On the suggestion of a classmate who went to work on Guimaras as priest, he returned to Guimaras Island to discern for the vocation. Getting on again, he tried to find it by living with a Muslim and Catholic couple in Macabebe, Pampanga.

It was in that search that the diocesan missionaries in Lubao, Pampanga, that he first heard the "small voice" tell him to embrace priesthood.

At the Holy Apostles Seminary, his batch of 60 aspirants dwindled to 30, then to 20, then to 11 and finally, six. Fuertes was among the few who remain.

Finishing the priesthood, remaining faithful to it, staying on with the Aeta and helping to share life's struggles are, he said, "graces of God."

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Inventor wins suit vs firm

Ayala Land subsidiary told to pay ₱90M in damages

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A QUEZON CITY JUDGE HAS ORDERED A SUBSIDIARY of real estate developer Ayala Land Inc. to pay an inventor more than ₱90 million in damages for using his patent for a modular housing system without his consent.

In his decision dated Dec. 18, Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 93 Judge Reinaldo Daway said the acts of Ayala Land Corp. were an infringement of Edgardo Vasquez's patent invention.

Vasquez is the president and chief executive officer of Vasquez Building Systems Corp. and former president of the Filipino Inventor's Society.

MONITOR A 11

HAPPINESS IS ... Two children come out of their godparent's house in Las Piñas City with big smiles after receiving gifts on Christmas Day.

MMDA reminds Metro residents: Mind your garbage

By DJ Yap

THIS BEING THE SEASON FOR indulgences, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority has only one reminder for the public: Mind your garbage.

In a period where the amount of trash traditionally doubles, residents in the metropolis were reminded to properly dispose of their waste.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the volume of garbage generated by Metro Manila's 11 million residents usually doubles in December, especially during the Yule holidays.

From a total of 5,000 to 6,000 tons on regular months, the figure rises to between 9,000 and 7,000 tons during the Christmas season, he added.

Of the total, only about 80 percent is collected properly while the rest ends up being dumped in canals and other waterways, the MMDA chair said.

Fernando, meanwhile, appealed to city dwellers to follow the MMDA's "door-to-door" garbage collection policy.

"Metro Manila residents should do their part by not throwing their garbage outside their homes before the dump trucks pass by to collect the garbage," he said.

At the same time, he assured residents living near waterways not to dump their waste into the bodies of water, saying he has already secured a commitment from local officials and garbage haulers.

He added that he has also talked with officials of Bulacan province and Navotas who secured less than they would normally collect from Metro Manila to use their sanitary landfills.

One chief of the garbage personnel by residents in the metropolis is Reynaldo Mina of the landfill in Rodriguez, Rizal. Some go to the Payatas dumpsite Quezon City and other landfills in the metropolis and nearby areas.

LONG WAY FROM HOME
An Ifaola woman and her baby, visitors to the city wait for area from passersby on T. M. Kalaw Street in Manila.
ERWIN M.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Man gets 14 years for robbing security agency

By Julie M. Aurelio

A IMAM CITY JUDGE HAS sentenced a man to a stiff prison of 14 years to prison for robbing a security agency of 35 Armalite rifles, two revolvers and 15 shotguns on New Year's Eve in 2003.

Raymund Bergalleng, a taxi driver, was also ordered to pay the Davao Security and Investigation Agency about P3 million in damages.

In his 11-page decision, Judge Pedro Combo of the Pinay City Regional Trial Court Branch 118 set aside Bergalleng's denial and alibi and instead gave weight to the testimony of two witnesses.

Court records showed that on Dec. 31, 2005, Bergalleng and nine other armed men pretended to be policemen and forced their way into the security agency located on Bak Avenue in Pinay City.

They then tied up security guards Silvia Ubas-Ubas and Adelio Pimentel at the establishment's parking area and seized the keys to the storage vault.

Pimentel and Ubas-Ubas later positively identified Bergalleng in court as one of the nine men who robbed the security agency.

"There was no question that they recognized Bergalleng's face because the area where they (Pimentel and Ubas-Ubas) were tied up is illuminated by light," Combo pointed out in his decision.

The robbers were able to steal some 35 Armalite cal. 5.56 rifles, two cal. .38 revolvers, 15 shotguns and 3,000 rounds of ammunition.

Holdup victims file complaint vs restaurant owner

By Jeannette I. Andrade

FIRED CUSTOMERS OF A RESTaurant in Quezon City which was robbed on Christmas Eve accused the establishment's owner of negligence yesterday.

One of those who filed a complaint at the police security office in Barangay Gumbo—the area where the restaurant is located—was businessman Carmen Cheng.

Cheng said she lost P500,000 worth of cash and jewelry to the six suspects who barged into the Chinaworld Bird Feed Restaurant in Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City on Dec. 24.

The robbers emptied the cash register and then forced around 13 customers to hand over their valuables to them.

In her complaint, Cheng criticized the restaurant for its lax security measures.

Brian Bollet, a staff of the barangay police security office, told the hoosier that Cheng and five other customers who claimed to had been robbed said that the restaurant owners, Sabrina Fernandez, did not handle the situation well.

Cheng, Bollet added, also complained that it the time of the robbery none of the restaurant's close-circuit security cameras was working.

Quezon City Police District Chief Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, meanwhile, told the hoosier that investigators have yet to identify the group behind the heist.

"None of the customers and employees was able to get a clear view of the suspects who were wearing motorcycle helmets," he said.

Inventor wins suit . . . from page A17

He sued the Iloilo Lead subsidiary for infringing on Dec. 30, 1999 after the firm allegedly copied the process of assembling an exercise wall structure of a modular housing unit, which the petitioner said he invented in 1994.

Vasquez demanded that Arida pay him P5M in moral damages for allegedly copying the Vasquez-columns—characterized by E-shaped sections and wall panels—and using them in its housing projects, particularly in the Sta. Isabel Village in Cuenca City.

Arida, however, denied his accusations, arguing that it had used the modular building system of Tee Holdings Plc., a British firm, and Swiss builder Maison Individuelles SA.

In his decision, Dewey said that Arida's defenses and evidence were well paved and in its housing projects in Tacoba, Quezon, Naga City, Rio Tinto, Batangas; Davao Mindoro, Cavite and Cebu City were "substantially similar or identical to appearance and construction" to Vasquez's inventions.

Dewey further noted that the differences or dissimilarities in the designs pointed out by the defendant "can hardly be noticed."

He then ordered Arida to pay Vasquez more than P4M million as "temperate damages or reasonable royalty with interest of six percent per annum from the date of the infringement case was filed."

Dewey also directed the defendant to immediately stop using the Vasquez technology in its housing projects.

The business tried to call officials of Avida Land Corp. but they could not be reached for comment.

METROBRIEFS

Salon loses more than P500,000 to robbers

MORE than P500,000 worth of expensive hair products were stolen from a salon in Tondo, Manila a day before Christmas, investigators DPCR Woman Conduct of the Manila Police District Station 2 said that the robbery at the Salon for Men and Women was discovered by inventory controller Carmen Pacasa when she came in at around 8:30 a.m. One of their cabinets. Excess lost the police, had been forced open and its contents missing. The cabinet contained 150 shampoo bottles worth P200,250; 130 hair treatment products worth P210,000; a box of straightening cream worth P37,500; 90 tubes of hair color, P23,500; 90 tubes of coloring products, P18,750; hair extension pieces, P30,000; and P15,000 in cash. Entrobal said they were looking into the possibility that the theft was an inside job since there were no signs of forced entry.

Alexis M. Lopez

Thieves steal 'pato,' 'lechon' on Christmas Eve

DYEN robbers have to celebrate Christmas. Two robberies were reported in Pasig City on Christmas Eve, when the suspects not only took cash and valuables from their victims, they also cutted away roasted delicacies. Three unidentified men held up a Goldilocks store on F. Legaspi Street, Barangay Maybunga, Pasig City past before closing time on Monday night. According to a report from the Pasig PNP, police, the three armed suspects barged inside the store at around 9 p.m. and divested the store employees of their cash and personal belongings. The store's cashier, Lorna Bersoo, 24, said the robbers took the store's earnings for the day worth P13,000. The suspects also robbed the employees of their cellular phones and necklaces, all totaling over P5,000. Before the suspects sped away, they also took with them a large box of duck, a type of rice cake considered to be one of the store's specialties. The report said the suspects boarded a white Mitsubishi Lancer box after the driver of a taxi cab who ran away with a lechon it wasted pig) that was supposed to be delivered to a house in Quezon City on Monday night. According to complainant Jeffrey Somolay, 19, a waiter of a restaurant at The Fort Global City in Taguig City, he flagged down the taxi cab with plate number TVT 588 in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City at around 10 p. m. he asked the driver to take him to a residence in Green Meadows, Quezon City to deliver the lechon. Somolay said the driver did not know the area so when they arrived near Valle Verde subdivision in Pasig City, he asked the driver to stop so he could get directions from the village security guard. When he got out of the cab, Somolay said the taxi driver immediately sped away taking with him the lechon worth about P6,000. Somolay said he and his boss are prepared to file charges against the taxi driver.

Kristine L. Alave

Milagros Postigo-Balaguer, 50

MILAGROS Postigo-Balaguer, a native of Iloilo, Ilgaon, Camarines Sur and a resident of Sucat, Muntinlupa City, passed away on Dec. 21 after battling cancer for over a year. Her body lies at the Eastern Funeral parlor on the East Service Road in Alabang, Muntinlupa. Balaguer, 50, will be laid to rest at 3 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 28, at the Bgllpay Cemetery in Sodder's Hill, Muntinlupa City. She is survived by her husband, Jun, and children Sofia, Joana, Ryan and Richard.

DID YOU KNOW

TS MADE further deterioration and loss of civilian lives due to Japanese attacks, American Gen. Douglas MacArthur declared Manila an open city preparing it as longer had military forces on Dec. 26, 1941. MacArthur hoped the Japanese would stop bombing the city because it no longer had military value. The Japanese, however, continued attacking Manila, destroying buildings like the Treasury Building.

American historian William Manchester later said, "The destruction of Manila was one of the greatest tragedies of World War II. Of all the allied capitals, only Warsaw (Poland) suffered more."

Cyrell L. Rondaveis, Inquirer Research

NUEVA ECIJA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. – Area 2
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Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) by hand to the NEECO II Area 2 Pre-qualification, Bids and Awards Committee (PBAC). The LOI, signed by an authorized representative, shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the interested party and name of the principal contact. It must be delivered by hand to and received by the PBAC at the NEECO II Area 2 Main Office with address at 2nd Floor Smile Arcade Building, Brgy. Aliate, Palayan City not later than 12:00 noon on January 9, 2008.

The details of the bidding or competitive selection process are contained in the Request for Proposal (RFP), which interested parties must secure from PBAC Secretary, Alicia Alcantara, during office hours (8:00 am to 5:00 pm) from December 19, 2007 to January 9, 2008, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

Only interested parties that submit the LOI on time and who have been reviewed and have paid for the RFP will be qualified to participate.

(Sgd.) **RAMON R. DE VERA**
General Manager

(Sgd.) **JUANITA G. IGNACIO**
Chairman, PBAC

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Guava

Thaksin to return home from exile

THAKSIN talks at a press conference in Hong Kong. AP

HONG KONG—OUSTED PRIME MINISTER Thaksin Shinawatra said on Tuesday he would return to Thailand from exile after the party he backed emerged from weekend elections from runner to form a coalition government.

Thaksin, his party dissolved after a bloodless 2006 coup and banned from politics for five years in electoral fraud, told a Hong Kong news conference he wanted to clear himself of the corruption charges brought by military-appointed investigators.

He declared again he would not re-enter politics himself when he returned "by April at the latest."

But, in a statement likely to upset his many enemies inside and outside the military, Thaksin said he would be happy to advise the People Power Party his supporters took over after their party was dissolved.

"I will not have any political position," he said after the PPP won 233 of the 480 seats in parliament in Sunday's election and started trying to put a coalition government together.

"That's enough. I am qualified politically," he said, but added: "I will give my ideas free of charge" if the PPP asked for them.

Thaksin called for reconciliation in a country the election proved still deeply divided between the urban middle classes whose mass protests preceded the coup and the countryside which swept him to two landslide election victories.

"I urge everybody concerned to forget the past and look forward to the bright and prosperous future for Thailand," he said.

However, the precise course that politics will take is still far from clear, with most parties saying they are unlikely to reveal their hands until the militarily appointed Election Commission finalizes the results, expected by Jan. 7.

The PPP coalition is also investigating scores of allegations of electoral fraud and there are frequently expressed suspicions that there will be military pressure to disqualify PPP winners and subside down its members.

"A PPP-led coalition would be a Council asset on the Irish Informant, joining the forces and interests of the majority of the electorate against a lame-duck military regime that includes Bangkok," political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak said. The loan Bangsudhirak said.

"Perhaps this is Thailand's irresistible reckoning, a collision course that was bound to arrive on the scene after decades of willful neglect of the majority by the minority," he wrote in the Bangkok Post newspaper.

The PPP won almost 50 percent of the popular vote, mostly in the rural areas where Thaksin is regarded as the first Thai leader to pay serious attention to poor country folk through cheap health care and pumping money into the villages.

Bangkok went solidly for the Democrat Party, the main opposition during Thaksin's five years in power, which won 165 seats and is favored by the military and royalist establishment.

Despite the prospect of the political turmoil of the past two years continuing, the Thai stock market rose one percent on reopening on Tuesday, a day after its election holiday.

Economic investors believed the results of the weekend's general election would help improve domestic political stability and economic growth, likely to fall from 5.1 percent in 2006 to around 4 percent this year, the lowest rate in six years.

But there were still fears the polarization of the country, which has had 16 coups in 75 years of on-off democracy, could result in more bloodshed and another military intervention. Reuters

No letup for Christmas for US troops in Iraq

BAGHDAD—CHRISTMAS EVE, late afternoon, and U.S. soldiers from 4th Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment piled into their Stryker armored vehicles for a patrol out on the streets of Baghdad.

This is the fifth Christmas that U.S. troops have been out in Iraq, and commanders say the best way to keep morale up is to keep moving.

There are special dinners, packages from home, religious services and decorations around camp, but no let-up to patrols.

"My personal goal would be to try to go ahead and keep the mindset constant," said Ray Mabus, who has signed up with the Army and his third Christmas in Iraq, looking after about 130 men as the first sergeant of a combat troop.

"We want to recognize it, go ahead and acknowledge it and celebrate it, but we're not going to let that be the point that probably an opportunity to dwell on where they're not and what they're not having right now," he said.

Iraq has become far less violent in recent months, and the mood among troops is visibly lighter than in Christmases past.

So far in December, 17 U.S. servicemen have died in Iraq, putting it on course to be the safest month for Americans since the war began, according to figures on website icasualties.org.

Forty-126 servicemen died in Iraq in November, compared with 126 in May.

The 4th Squadron received a flood of goodwill packages this Christmas from friends and family of a soldier who was killed in Iraq.

The squadron chaplain, Capt. Bryan Hatch, was getting out the gifts by opening up a Christmas Eve "store" where everything is free. He said he had given out fleece sweatshirts and portable CD players as well as socks, drinks and snacks.

Presents from home keep soldiers' spirits up, he said.

"You get the blues around Christmas time," he said. Reuters

Kyrgyzstan is Santa's new home

BISHKEK—BISHKEK: A NOVEL remedy to revive its rickety economy. The tiny ex-Soviet nation of Kyrgyzstan has declared itself the new home of Santa Claus.

Lifting Swedish engineering firm that demonstrated the ideal spot for Santa's global toy-delivery hub, officials in this predominantly Muslim country have quickly moved to capitalize on the finding.

They named a mountain peak after Santa, to join Mount's Lenin, and Stalin, and declared 2008 "The Year of Santa Claus."

"Its slogan will be 'Kyrgyzstan is the land of Santa Claus,'" said Kyrgyz tourism authority spokesperson Nurbiya Sultanova.

In most Western countries Santa Claus, or Father Christmas, is thought to live at the North Pole or in Finland. However, if he were located in Central Asia and started westwards on his traditional Christmas Eve trips, Kyrgyz officials said he would have a more efficient delivery route.

"He can eliminate time-consuming detours and avoid subjecting his reindeer to undue strain," engineering consultants at Stockholm-based Sweco, who used geography and demographics in their research, said in a press release.

A group of professional mountain climbers will pitch the country's flag at the newly renamed peak, Kyrgyzstan's tourism authority said, while a world festival of Santas is planned for the capital's main square. Reuters

KYRGYZ schoolchildren return home after taking part in "The Best Santa" contest in the village of Tash-Moinok. Some Swedish experts insist Santa should have his home based somewhere in the mountainous ex-Soviet state because it is the only place from which he can reach on time every home on earth during the short Christmas period. AFP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, December 26, 2007
Stephen, 1st Martyr
1st Reading: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Gospel: Matthew 10:17-22

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be on your guard, with respect to people, for they will hand you over to their courts and they will flog you in their synagogues. You will be brought to trial before rulers and kings because of me, and so you may witness to them and the pagans.

"But when you are arrested, do not worry about what you are to say and how you are to say it; when the hour comes, you will be given what you are to say. For it is not you who will speak, but it will be the Spirit of your Father who is to speak.

"Brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against parents and have them put to death. Everyone will hate you because of me, but whoever stands firm to the end will be saved."

Commentary:

He didn't have to say. Another child will die with us, for us. And when others will die with other fellow men, will be born to him and die with him. Stephen is the first to die, proclaiming who else Child truly is—Jesus the Beloved of God, prophet, and crucified one risen from the dead for his brother in the power of the Spirit. Stephen seeks to live as Jesus did, in service to his brothers and sisters, and he dies as Jesus died, praying to God to forgive those who murder him. The dying and rising in Jesus the Son of God has begun.

We have been baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and we too are called to participate in the life of God in Jesus and to witness to it. Stephen is the first of Many. He is not the last. And one, Son of the Father, the Fullness of the Spirit. We will be given of the fullness of that Spirit and we too are sent as the children of God to live the world. God knows flesh, and knows it is our flesh that must bear God's blood in the world.

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WORLDBRIEFS

Midnight Mass at ground zero

NEW YORK— The first midnight Mass organized ever beneath either another's worn-still-standing away the district of the fallen twin towers and surrounding location from the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack. The last Mass was held Monday night, drawing pilgrims, firefighters, grieving relatives and Sept. 11 survivors a final chance to pray on Christmas Eve at the site, where intensifying construction is taking up more and more open space. "It was poignant; it was moving, it was uplifting," the Rev. Brian Jordan said after the service ended early Tuesday. AP

Child porn ring probed

BERLIN— Prosecutors in the eastern German state of Saxony-Anhalt are investigating 12,000 people on suspicion of possessing illegal images of children, state prosecutor Peter Vogt told German radio on Monday. "They had changes of downloading ... child pornography," Vogt told MDR radio. Vogt said the probe was launched in the spring and has since traced suspects in 70 different countries. It began the investigation after a tip from a Berlin Internet provider. Reuters

4 dead in Pakistan ambush

QUETTA— Pakistani militants ambushed a police truck in the remote southwest, killing at least four people and injuring five other police, officials said Tuesday. The attack on the truck, carrying seven men from the paramilitary Frontier Corps, happened in a rural area of Kalat, some 40 kilometers south of Quetta, said Naseerudin Lanwi, the area police chief. The Baloch Liberation Army, a militant group demanding greater rights and increased royalties for gas and minerals, claimed responsibility. AP

Artillery attack in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO— Sri Lankan soldiers killed 11 Tamil Tiger rebels in an artillery attack and gunbattles along the northern front line, the military said on Tuesday. Troops clashed in the villages of Pirakkanal, in Vavuniya district, came under mortar fire from the rebels on Monday, Thilakasiri Dissanayake, army defense ministry official. The attack wounded two soldiers, said the official on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media. AP

Indonesia boat accident

JAKARTA— Indonesian rescuers searched for seven people still missing on Tuesday after a ferry sank in high seas off Sumatra island, making two people dead, police said. Five survivors were found after the accident in the Malacca Strait on Monday, said local police chief Ajun Sanjiz. Reuters

22 killed in suicide car blast near Iraq residential complex

BAGHDAD— A SUICIDE CAR bomb exploded outside a residential complex belonging to a state-run oil company north of Baghdad on Tuesday, killing 22 people and wounding 80, police, local hospital officials and the Oil ministry said.

Local authorities said that the blast was still being pulled from the rubble of two destroyed buildings and that the death toll was expected to rise.

The bombing, who was driving a pickup truck, detonated his explosives when Iraqi police and technicians of a volunteer security force prevented him from entering the gate of the compound belonging to the state-run North Oil company in Beiji, about 250 kilometers north of Baghdad, a police officer said. He said some of the residential buildings were damaged in the blast.

Most of the 22 killed were civilians, and at least three were children, the police officer said. The dead also included guards of the oil company and members of the volunteer force.

An official at the main hospital in Beiji gave the same casualty figures and said 70 more wounded.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release information to the media.

The US military said in a statement that 20 people were killed and 66 wounded. The reason for the discrepancy in casualty figures was not immediately clear.

Authorities imposed a curfew on the city—home to the country's largest refinery—until further notice.

Insurgent forces known as Awakening Councils—groups of Sunni Arab fighters who have turned against al-Qaida and are now funded by the US—have been credited with helping reduce violence in Iraq in recent months. Although bombings and other attacks continue throughout the country their number has fallen. The US military has said there has been a 60 percent decrease in violence since June. AP

Somali kidnappers free French journalist

LE GOUIL

NAIROBI— SOMALI GUNMEN released on Monday a French journalist they had kidnapped eight days ago in the northern Puntland region, local officials said.

"The French journalist has just been released and is now staying with officials, head of their anti-crime clipboards in the town," Puntland trade and industry minister Abdirahman Yusuf Mmaxamed Reuters.

Witnesses said the kidnappers handed Gwen Le Gouil to French diplomats at a hotel in Boosaso earlier on Monday.

"I'm fine. I'm healthy. I'm only feeling very tired," Le Gouil told a brief news conference in Puntland's main port. "I'm very happy to be free to go back to France and see my family."

Puntland Minister Ahmed Saeed Ahmed said no ransom had been paid for the Frenchman. The gunmen were reportedly demanding up to $80,000 for his safe return.

"The journalist was released without condition. Whoever was responsible for the abduction will face the law," he said.

A French diplomat at the press conference, who asked not to be named, thanked the local authorities and told reporters:

"We're leaving Puntland tomorrow because it's Christmas, which is very important." Reuters

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WHAT'S INSIDE
- Athletes' needs to get priority, says Ramirez /A22
- La Salle gets to the heart of the matter /A23
- Tired of losing, Bulls sack coach /A24

Alaska clobbers Red Bull

MEHRAN Epaps Bravo spots up a shot against two Alaska defenders.

Victory surprises even Aces' mentor Cone

By Marvang B. Castillo

SURPRISES REALLY DO COME on Christmas Day—and they're not just for kids.

An Alaska team that was so shambles the last two games suddenly played great, and the Aces got back on the winning track in a routine blast left even them, the usually talkative Tim Cone, struggling to find the words.

"I don't know what to say," Cone said minutes after his Aces annihilated Red Bull, 110-77, in the Asean Hotel Philippine Cup elimination at the Araneta Coliseum yesterday. "Seriously *didn't think* we would win today, much less in the way we did.

"This one was a complete surprise, to tell you the truth," added the undisputed coach.

Alaska established control early and never let up, building leads of as many as 26 points late in the fourth period to snap a two-game slide and improve to 9-7 and keep the the most mathematically in the hunt for one of the two automatic semifinal seats.

"We have really been struggling with our energy the last couple of weeks," Cone, who won a Grand Slam with this franchise in 1998, added. "We were just talking of trying to steal one (Cone) today by keeping it close [to the endgame].

"I didn't think the energy would suddenly come back today."

Mike Custer scored 19 points and John Fermin shot 35 and grabbed the same number of boards as Alaska, which lost the 2006 All-Filipino to Coca-Cola on Christmas Day twice for the first time in three games on this particular unusual playdate.

Red Bull shot a lethargic 27 percent from the field, which statisticians later said could be the worst in the rich history of the franchise.

"We shot the ball pretty well today," Cone added. "And they shot absolutely horrible. I wish I could say that their 27 percent (shooting) was because of our defense."

Alaska didn't need to play much defense, as Red Bull, the runners-up to Sunsapay Cinders last year, really did not have the luck of making shots out of the ordinary.

The Bombo actually couldn't make all the open layups they had come by their way.

Only Cyrus Baguio finished in double figure for Red Bull with 16 and the usually prolific Jondy Wahrmeyer, who came into the game averaging 14.9 points, wound up with just two.

Jeffrey Cariaso also scattered 11 and Willie Miller, the reigning MVP had 10 points, five rebounds and seven assists, but spin more inside the paint that eluded two-

RANDY Moss (center) of the New England Patriots has always had to face top-notch defenses such as the one put up by Miami Dolphins' Lance Schulters (left) and Will Allen.

Patriots have Moss running for record

Character plays vital role in PBL finals–Alas

By Jasmine W. Paye

VETERAN MENTOR LOUIE ALAS NOTES that team character will spell the difference in the PBL championship showdown between Harbor TwinSpin and Hardware Giveaway.

"It will be a very interesting series," said Alas. "They've both talented teams and these guys always value can-do spirit and defense. But currently, it will depend on their character and their discipline to execute their plays both offensively and defensively."

Harbor and Hardware Centers, both seeking a historic title run, will clash in Game 1 of the best-of-three series at 4 p.m. tomorrow at the MetroMotorcade Coliseum.

Twenty-Nothing Bistro and Hard Rip Coffee will dispute third place in a knockout game at 2 p.m.

Alas, who assisted coach Jared Bowl in the Harbor TwinSpin-Pilipinas team's recent golden performance in the 24th Southeast Asian Games, cited the Completer Protector aggressiveness you'll see in the series.

"They're prolific," said Alas of the Completer Protectors, who are aiming to capture their perfect 11-0 run with a championship. "But you also can't belittle the small guards of Harbor Center."

Alas was referring to TY Ding, Al Ilegans and PBA Rookie Dranreb Mercado, whom coach Jorge Gallent usually used if they need to launch 3-point bombs in the hope of changing the complexion of the game.

He continued, "With Eder Retirreal around, Dhaze coach Jun Madrid can opt for a taller first five. They also have a deeper bench."

Aside from the retired 5 Retirreal, Jun Reed's other regular starters are 6-foot-1 Reed Bartilla, 6-foot-4 Mitch Mathews, 6-foot-6 Leroy Rodrigues and 6-foot-5 Rod Bugaoisan.

Sir Alas noted the building reminiscent of Batang Pier, the powerhouse fielding for a franchise that has been in existence since 1975.

"It's impressive when a team recovers after losing Game 1 in a best-of-three, but Harbour did that against San Mig Coffee [in the semifinals]," he said. "Even better, they won the next one [game 2 of the series] by wide margins. I don't know how Hapee would react if they lose Game 1. That's where the team's character will come in."

Since both teams are disciples of no-strategy brand of play I can see a high-scoring game," said Alas, who guided the Lemera Engine to several SCAA championships.

Meanwhile, the PBL returns in Cavitenon next during the Finals series by raffling off special items to the audience starting tomorrow.

Among the prizes that will be given away are one Suzuki Intruder Motorcycle, three Garmin Magic King Version 9 calendar entertainment, Fukuda TS 16 in-front roll operator, five 32-inch entertainment and other products from SM Appliances Center.

PHGAD, Mobico: Onward to the Beijing Olympics

Athletes' needs to get priority, says Ramirez

By Jose Navarro

THE REQUIREMENTS NEEDED OF the athletes for an international multi-event gathering are normally issued days before the tournament proper. Worse, those necessities usual have come no competition after itself.

The partnership of the Philippine Olympic Committee and the Philippine Sports Commission for the 2008 Olympics has decided to do away with the cramming by addressing the needs of the athletes early in the season.

"We don't want a repeat of what athletes had gone through in the SEA (Southeast Asian) Games," said POC chief Jose Villaluz "Butch" Ramirez.

The track and field athletes received their competition shoes during the tournament apart from the late arrival of some of the supplements especially the Halimuds for the contentious event in Holdom, Bankoman, Thailand.

Consequently, the Philippines capturered only five gold medals in athletics, a far cry from the usual nine to 12 golds the country had won on its previous SEAG campaigns.

"To prevent that incident from happening again, we will complete all the requirements with respect to uniforms and equipment so that for three months of the year," said Ramirez.

"So by the second quarter of the year, all the coaches and athletes have to think about is their bio to us training."

Ramirez will spearhead a save group tasked to oversee the preparations for the Beijing Games next year along with POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

Determined on its drive to win the first ever Olympic gold, the group immediately designated POC first vice president Nicolas Panlaweda to Philippine chief de mission to the Games.

Taekwondo jins Edwardo Go and Rhea Antoinette Byrnes, Hoyt Intarsoe of boxing and archer Mark Javier have already made it to the qualifying round after their respective impressive Olympic qualifying rounds.

SEA Games speedskate gold medalist and BMW Miguel Molina has also entered the Olympic qualifying along with tri-ice national swimmers JR Welsh, Ryan Arabejo and Daniel Coakley.

God knows what's wrong with RP sports

CELEBRATION: A PEW HELPLESS encompassment golden sports in a cool, once fated hunt for in Barangay Pasiga, Lipa City to mourn for what they have been doing for over half a decade now. They celebrate the birth of Christ by handing out bagfuls of gifts and a little stash to poor fatherchildren in the area. Cyril Sunday Imperial Chairman of Philippine Sunday City sent in double cash items and beach balls to carry in Philippine Basketball League contributed much alone. Dr. Raul Bayes of AFB Weekly Ben Tolosa and Sports, chefchairman of Pasiga Board's Action every sunday San Pablo with separate large of goodies for over 80 families. There will be games and hunts, stuffed toys, and other prizes courtesy of Dave Ibleza, Mar Morelo and Rene Monte, media coordinator. As in the past, great and reception end up equally satisfied.

* * *

The decision was to grave it would require a major surgery, nothing short of multi-organ transplant, if RP sports is to function effectively hereafter.

But there is the hope against hope.

Based on the candle-lang cooperation subsequent instances of these sports leaders, they honestly had the slightest clue that the biggest problem was none other than themselves.

The hardships. They usurp the malfunctioning organs that needed instant replacement. They had long surpassed the level of their ambitions, thereby ceasing, wide-spread illness that had resulted in many failed sports executive shrivel.

* * *

Of course, these officials have succeeded in starting out, through thick and thin, while RP sports in still, not to mention countless Pinoy fans, each with repeated defeats and humiliations.

Not exaggle, one leader sees the lack of funding as the biggest obstacle.

Another official humbly admitted the debacle in Thailand was a learning experience, while a third one claimed the athletes deserved.

They've got to know what's in-structured wrong first, before they could agree on a proper solution.

Right? Well, anything really wrong with the RP athletes, many of them were capable of winning or decorating the name Filipino everywhere, mainly by endeavoring.

* * *

The problem was that many athletes also either ended up at the wrong place and the wrong place.

Why? Because many wrong them who called the shots fit Team Philippines had a very major slice and knife of knowhow we have to do it right and well.

In fact, there were even those who needed a major overhaul and cleanse the idea in order to cure here.

The answer solutions, needless to say, is for those sick sports officials to undergo a corporate surgery.

They've got to stop doing, now!

This, they didn't have to be told by Chief Himself!

Unfortunately, God knows this form of selfless sacrifice is not in supposed to in those old colony Philippines.

MARIKINA City Mayor Marides Carlos Fernando and Groundsource Engine Revs the the ceremonial/engines/sidewalking the Marikina City Age Group Invitational Class Championships/for Sunday at the Marikina Spot to Complex. Joining Revs as MCP local Johnny "Joel" Gandia and National Master Rudy Ibanez.

Reyes, Mejia top Marikina age-group meet

MICHAEL REYES AND DEXTER MEJIA Alaba topped the Marikina City Age Group Invitational Class Championships at the Marikina Sports Complex on Sunday.

Reyes, 15, defended duties Reyes, 14, in the 100- and 200-meter dash to bag the 14-year-old division in 11.88 and 24.80.

Jumbo finished with 4.3 points, the same output as MJ Sequera, but took the title on the tie break.

In the 400m division (14 and under) Cherry Ann, 12, split honors with Normal De Jesus, 12, to create offense step to with Normal Concepcion 13, and De Jesus for third place with 4.5 points each. Cherry Ann emerged victor on the tie break.

Marlon Bernardino

So heads RP squad vying in Asian meet

YOUNG SENSATION MIGUEL So will spearhead a strong Philippine team to the Asian Chess Team Championships slated Jan. 2-13, 2008 in Visakhapatnam, South India.

Among his, currently the world's youngest Grandmaster at 14, are GMs Joey Antonio, Jayson Gonzales and Mark Paragua and International master Jake Catalan Salarda.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Prospero "Butch" Pichay said MOP secretary-general and Tagaytay City Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino will be joining the country's contingent as the tournament during a special gathering of players and media in the Senate-pandi's Restaurant along A. Mabini St., Manila.

The 10-day competition category officially selects top chess players in Asia and the Asian Federation.

So completed his GM requirements at age 14 years, one month and 7 days during the Asian Zonal round of the Philippine Cup chess championship held at the Bay View Hotel Dolfo Boulevard City on Dec. 6.

The tournament was still in session proved of Merlito Jose Lorenzo, Darwin Wilfredo, Mikaella Dan and Catherine Perena.

"This will be our initial salvo for the new year," said Pichay, who is running for reelection as head of the country's chess body during the annual NCFP elections on Jan. 19 at the Dagonoy International Convention Center.

Tolentino, on the other hand, said the combination of youth (So, Sadorra) and experience (Paragua, Antonio and Paragua) makes the Philippine RP team as "one of the teams to beat in the Asian tournament."

SPORTSWATCH

Makati 6-cock derby finals today

THE TOO-HOT CHAMPIONSHIP round of Pamanang Gelanan 6-cock derby starts today at the Makati Coliseum with over 600 entries from all over Luzon.

Participants who scored 5 and 7 ½ points in the eliminations qualifying round will compete today.

Those with 5 points will battle it out on Saturday.

Worth Like Century Rush Jaded and Millions Go of WTI Sports and Amusement Corp. is today giving a grand prize of ₱1.4 million to the winners.

Meanwhile, cockfights at Sta. Ana Cockpit which was closed down for good recently will be held only on Holidays.

Bulacan Governor Josephine Sy Alvarado announced.

Sta. Ana's regular sabong schedule (Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday) will be transferred by WTI Sports and Amusement Corp.

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La Salle gets to the heart of the matter in comeback

By Jasmine W. Paya

IT WAS UNDENIABLE that one would creep into the La Salle sports machine, especially after a one-year suspension kept them out of the competitive arena.

But there was one place that one could not reach. And all the turmoil in the world could not stop a juggernaut anchored on a rock solid basketball program because of one reason. The Archers, both seniors and juniors, know that in the heart of the matter, hard really matters.

Fueled by a throbbing pride that refused to be retired in and a heart that wouldn't give up despite the odds, La Salle capped its comeback year with not just one, but two basketball titles at the close of the UAAP boogeyman.

"Individually, I think my players are really more than great," said Green Archers coach Franz Pumaren. "But we worked as a team."

Karl T. Ilet's name looked as if the suspension wrought by a harrowing volleyball scandal lasted just for a day as the collegiate powerhouse pulled up right where it last left off.

As the only squad to consecutively enter the Final Four, the Archers' return this season turned out to be different with TY Tang, Chaks Henseres, Jr. Casio and Alex Mumbach leading the charge.

"It only showed how we really prepared for the season," said Pumaren.

The La Salle Zobel Junior Archers—the 2005 champion turned unrelenting curiosity of the pennitenare moved on the seniors team—also made positive use of the forced break.

"We were never given a chance to defend our championship last year, but the good part was we started early with our preparation for this season," said Zobel coach Boots Aldapose.

Although early losses pointed to the damaging effects of the suspension, the UAAP Finals crossed any doubts as the La Salle seniors and juniors squads pulled off upset sweeps.

The Green Archers spoiled the perfect 14-0 elimination run of the University of the East Red Warriors during the heat of three championship showdowns to capture their seventh crown.

"Experience was plainly to see for you," said Pumaren. "My players are veterans of many wars."

But Pumaren, too, pointed to the Archers' Undertaker strategy: "Our defense was really fantastic in the series. We would not outscore them, they're too talented, so we tried to hold them (down)."

In a similarly unexpected feat, the Junior Archers toppled defending champion and Series rival Ateneo Blue Eagles in two straight games with Joshua Webb, Mario Fermin and Jed Mangahas starring in their second title run.

"We played the same in the elimination and we were beaten badly, and I thought this wasn't to our year, but the boys refused to give up," said Aldapose.

TRUST winning feeling is best captured by the likes of Miguel Oliveta (left) and Joshua Webb of the juniors squad.

POCHOLO Villanueva (back) and Baden Maidana celebrate a victory over the UE Red Warriors.

Alaska clobbers Red Bull

From page B10

defenders giving the Aces a 73-44 lead with 1:33 left in the third.

The Alaska victory was very important since it put the Aces back inside the circle of teams that could make the playoff straights, or least in the quarterfinals.

Alaska stretched to a 23-11 lead and never led by less than 10 after Celino Cruz hit a three-pointer early in the second to cut the deficit to 33-23.

Relief swingman Aaron Aban scored on a putback of his own miss with 5:31 left that showed the Aces to a 97-63 lead.

The scores

Alaska

ALASKA (98)—Cortez 18, Fermin 15, Celino 14, Aban 14, Thoss 12, Dagupano 11, Abad 8, Dela Cruz 5, Rosa 2, Guiterrez 0, Tolentino, Lastre.

RED BULL (79)—Wenceslao 16, Hugo 8, Cruz 6, Gozum 7, Reyes 7, Muñoz 7, Ferrer 7, Serrano 5, Sharma 5, Robinson 3, Webb 3, Valenzuela 2.

Quarters: 23-11, 43-28, 73-45, 98-79

Patriots . . .

From page B28

stays in that [last] column, I'm fine. Basically what I'm saying is that I want to keep winning. To hell with the record."

Along those lines, Moss touched on the season's 13-3 record.

"I don't think the people, and when I say the people I mean the fans of the game of football, I don't think they realize what we're doing, how hard of work we're putting in to what we're trying to accomplish," he said. "Coach Belichick, before this team was ever brought together, he's already had a history of being able to get things done late in the season, basically some playoff type scramble that runs."

Last week, Brady threw 13 of his 28 passes in the direction of Moss. Statistics, he contended to the passes in Moss's neighborhood, at times seemingly forcing balls into heavy coverage.

"He's had an incredible season for us and it's obvious they pay a lot of attention to him when he's on there on the field, as they should, and you have to find ways to keep him involved," Brady said. "He has a great route on his first touchdown. Other second touchdown was a great route, and whenever he's open he usually gets it. Even when he's not open sometimes I throw it up there."

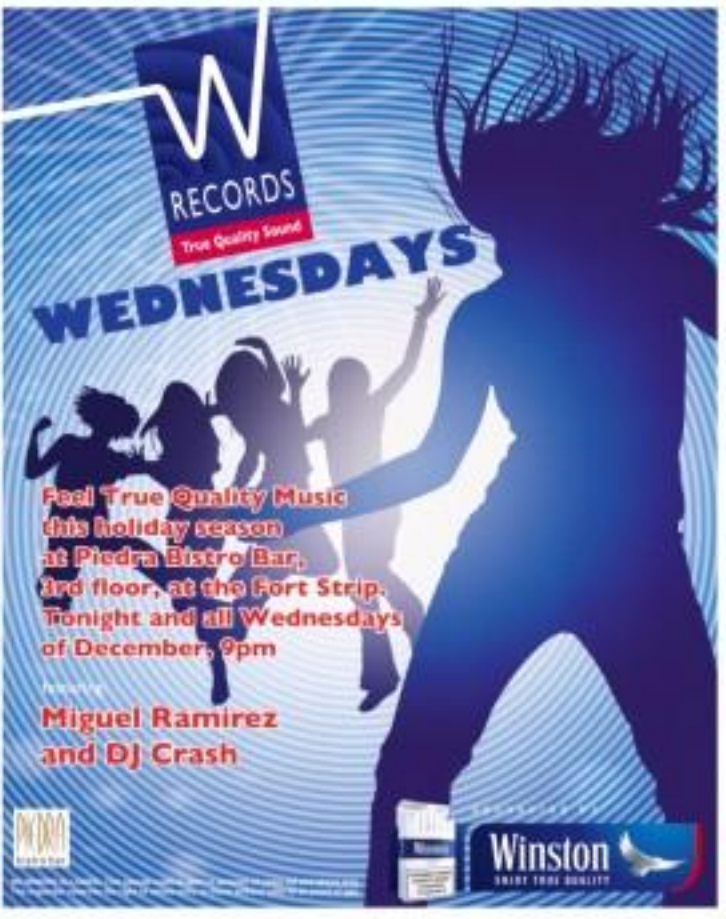
That seemed to be the case in the second half, when Brady tried to hit Moss running down the middle of the field, with three Dolphins surrounding him. Moss reached to the ball before taking himself out of the game for the next play.

"All I knew it it hurt," Moss said when asked if he felt there was pass interference on the play.

Despite not getting the desired results, coach Bill the Belichick kept trying to run to daylight.

"We talked all week about trying to get up on those safeties and trying to give Brady an opportunity down the middle," Brady explained. "Those guys were pretty disciplined you try to lay it up there to give him an opportunity to make the play. It would certainly work well when he catches them."

AP/Times Metro Service



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SPORTS

CHICAGO Bulls forward Jon Sonik (right) and Houston Rockets forward Luis Scola fight for the rebound in a Dec. 22 match won by the Rockets, 114-98.

Tired of losing, Bulls sack coach

DEERFIELD, ILLINOIS—SCOTT SKILES was fired Monday as coach of the Chicago Bulls, who have one of the worst records in the Eastern Conference.

The underachieving Bulls (9-16) have lost three of their last four and were booed throughout by the home crowd during Saturday night's 114-98 loss to the Houston Rockets.

"I felt like something was going to happen," forward Lindsey Dring said. "I didn't know whether it was players or coaches. But you could definitely feel there was something in just defensive likes we were on the roster page."

With three straight playoff appearances after a long postseason drought, the Bulls' expectations were soaring. Then, they dropped 14 of their first 22 games and they've been unable to capture the intensity that catapulted them into the second round of the playoffs last season.

They've lacked a consistent inside scoring threat the past few years, and some their promotive players are all torque.

Chicago is shooting a league-worst 41.3 percent, which partially explains why it hasn't been able to sustain a winning streak.

"This was a difficult decision to make, but one that was necessary at this time," Bulls general manager John Paxson said in a release. "Scott helped us in many ways during his time with the Bulls, most importantly, he helped this franchise get back to respectability. I am appreciative of his hard work and the impact that he left on our locker."

SKILES: Threatened

The Bulls didn't immediately announce a replacement for Skiles, who went 140-172 after replacing Bill Cartwright in November 2000.

Chicago is in a familiar spot with this season's slow start.

The Bulls dropped their first nine in 2000-01 and were 4-15 before going on a surge that led to 17 wins and their first playoff appearance since the Michael Jordan era.

They needed a late surge the next season to make it to the playoffs, winning 11 of their final 14 regular season games to finish with 41 wins.

And with high expectations following the arrival of free Williams, the Bulls promptly dropped nine of their first 12 but are soon before turning things around. They wound up with 49 wins and swept Miami to register a playoff series, their first in six games to Denver in the second round.

There were no major acquisitions in the off-season. Instead, the front office decided to save the sum the Bulls did not make—contract extensions for free Gordon and Dring and a blockbuster trade for Bobe Brown.

Dring called Skiles "a great coach" but the effort wasn't there, particularly the past few games. Pilfordsaid he wakes them up or is just the start of a shake-up remains in he sees.

"It's a lot on our shoulders right now," Dring said.

Skiles and the Bulls nearly parted ways in June 2002, however, he agreed to a four-year, $16.5 million contract extension after talking with owners Jerry Reinsdorf. AP

No exemptions for Wie, misses first PGA event since 2004

TUCSON, ARIZONA—MICHELLE WIE MIGHT start her 2004 season in Hawaii, but not at the Sony Open.

Wie, who has played the PGA Tour event every year since 2004, did not receive one of the four unrestricted sponsor exemptions, tournament officials announced Thursday.

Swing coach David Leadbetter said the 14-year-old from Honolulu likely would ask for exemptions at one or both of the LPGA Tour events in Hawaii that kick off the women's golf season in February. He also said reconsideration against the tour would probably be on hold until she gets her health and her game back together.

"She's not ready to play in that yet," Leadbetter said of the Sony Open, where Wie first rose to fame by shooting 68 at age 14 and missing the cut by one shot. "Her health is getting better, her game is getting better, the confidence is growing."

"The whole goal is to get back on track after the debacle last year."

The debacle included Wie trying to play despite both wrists being injured. She made only three cuts in nine starts, withdrew twice and only broke par two times. She also endured harsh criticism from Annika Sorenstam, who was angered by Wie pulling out of the founder's tournament, only to be seen hitting balls on the range at the next tournament.

The Sony Open still will have a couple of teenagers from Hawaii in the tournament that starts Jan. 16.

One exemption went to Yuki Inamori, who last year became the youngest player to 50 years to make a cut on the PGA Tour. The other was given to 17-year-old Alex Cheng, Wie's former classmate at Punahou School. AP

Mirza's wish: Injury-free season

MUMBAI, INDIA—INDIA'S SANIA MIRZA is hoping for an injury-free new year after her 2003 season was cut short due to a series of niggles.

Mirza, 21, achieved a career-high singles ranking of 27 in August, following an impressive run in the US hardcourt circuit where she reached the Stanford Classic final.

But she lost time to injury and a surgery.

"My first goal is to remain injury-free for the year. I have three-four months (in injuries) last year," Mirza told reporters at a promotional event on Monday.

World number 30 Mirza suffered a wrist injury after the US Open, where she reached the third round, and then cut back the session by a couple of weeks following a strained abdominal muscle in October.

The Indian number one underwent surgery in March following a ligament injury in her right knee at the Qatar Open.

Mirza, who will be back in action next month in Dubai, is hoping for a good outing at the Australian Open.

"Being the first grand slam, there is where you know the most surprises because I feel because everyone's coming out of their off season," said Mirza, who beat five top-20 players en route to reaching contract number four Martina Hingis last year.

"A lot of seeds go out in the first couple of rounds," said Mirza who has reached the fourth round of the 2005 US Open. Reuters

SAMBA: Mirza poses on a padel at the tournament at Mumbai.

Beckham back in Capello's fold after bitter separation

LONDON—DAVID BECKHAM IS EAGER to play under new England manager Fabio Capello despite the stormy relationship the two shared at Real Madrid.

The 32-year-old midfielder has played 99 games for England and hopes to reach his century of appearances in England's friendly against Switzerland at Wembley Stadium on Feb. 9.

"Fabio is one of the managers players I look up to and want to manage them. I hope I'll be part of his plans," Beckham told BBC Radio in an interview to be broadcast on Christmas Day. Excerpts were released by the BBC on Monday.

"I think he is a great appointment for England. Everyone seems extremely excited by the fact he has respect and success. He has definitely got that in his career."

Capello dropped Beckham from Real Madrid when the former England captain announced his move in play for the Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer. But Beckham's loan back his place and helped Madrid win the Spanish league title last season.

"There were ups and downs with me and the manager at the time but he brought me back into the team and he had the belief in me to put me back in the team," Beckham said. AP

IN THIS ISSUE

■ **Bangko Sentral** to further cut key policy rates in January, says DBS /B2

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Maroño • Assistant Editor Carole S. Mariano

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NORTHWEST AIRLINES

IFC's P5-B bond float hits a snag

BIR refuses to exempt securities from taxes

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORP.'S PLAN TO OFFER P5 billion in long-term peso-denominated bonds has hit a snag due to the Bureau of Internal Revenue's refusal to exempt from taxes the securities to be issued by the World Bank's investment banking arm, banking sources said.

The five-year bond float by IFC, which was supposed to be the second triple A-rated supranational institution after the Asian Development Bank to offer peso bonds, was originally planned for issuance last September.

Asked about the tax issue with the BIR, IFC country manager Jesse Ang told reporters: "We're a tax-exempt institution. When ADB issued their bonds (in May), they were tax-exempt, so we shouldn't be treated similarly."

Banking sources said the BIR, on the other hand, was citing a precedent in the past when the IFC was not tax-exempt.

But the IFC is confident that the BIR would soon issue a favorable ruling on its bond float.

"We have to go through our approval process. We have made our application and talked to the agencies. What we're going through is some reallocation process," Ang said.

Until the BIR approves the tax exemption, the IFC said the bond float would likely be on hold.

"We are a multilateral institution like the ADB, I think the question here is if an institution like us (which is part of the World Bank group, which has a treaty (with the government), shouldn't be tax-exempt," Ang said.

"It's a (re)bundling: so it's up to the government how they will deal with this. The (deals) if they saved with president with ADB, they will figure it out," he added.

By offering the bonds, Ang said the IFC would provide opportunity for Filipino investors to invest in peso-denominated triple-A bonds.

IFC has matched First Metro Investment Corp. and British bank Standard Chartered to arrange the P5 billion bond float.

FMIC and Standard Chartered also handled the P5 billion five-year bond float of ADB last May. It carried a fixed rate of 5.25 percent a year and was priced at a spread of 31 basis

B7/B10/B11

Dollar remittances fuel new affluence among Filipinos

By Dazlen L. Lucas

(Undated)

EMIGRANT FILIPINOS GAVE SO THEIR own home a record-breaking amount of dollar remittances, fueling a spending boom that has permeated almost all sectors of the economy.

According to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), overseas Filipino workers have sent home $11.47 billion as of the first 10 months of the year. This is expected to rise further to at least $13.4 billion by yearend.

Including the amount sent home through informal remittance channels, the conservative estimate of OFW funds sent home would stand close to $20 billion by the end of this year—almost 10 percent of the country's gross economic output, which is expected to be worth about $1.37 billion this year.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more evident than in the country's numerous malls, which have been packed with holiday shoppers in recent weeks.

SPECIAL REPORT

"Sales have really been strong for us this year," said Jeffrey C. Lim, the chief financial officer of SM Prime Holdings Inc., the company which runs the country's biggest chain of shopping malls.

In an interview, Lim said that some stores (also in the various SM malls) have so far shown a 7 percent increase on the average, surpassing sales expected in recent years.

"This is a very good figure for us," he said, adding that this report has yet to factor in sales from the previous weekend, when shopping was expected to peak ahead of Christmas Day.

"We are still looking at the numbers, but for certain, (sales) will be stronger than last year's," Lim said.

According to the latest BSP survey, food and household needs constituted to dominate the share of spending of consumers in general, but more so in the case of OFWs' families in the provinces.

So-called "consumer durables" like appliances also rank high on the list—a fact that is not lost on mall operator SM.

"During those times, it is really the food (segment) that does very well," Lim said. "When people go shopping, they also eat."

While other forms of money shopping has always been a strong theme for SM, Lim noted that the growing affluence has also resulted in stronger sales for many of the higher-end retailers in the malls.

"Many high end stores at the likes of Ann, for example, are doing very well," he said. "I guess Ladies are (increasing across) the board."

B2/B3

Currencies

DEC/DEC

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

$1 = ₱41.83 ▲

$1 = ₱118.18 ▼

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 21, 2007

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

DEC/DEC

(One-week chart for exposure: Page B4)

Ladduster trade seen

MARKETS REOPEN TODAY AFTER A long holiday break with trading expected to be thin and somewhat throughout the week.

Traders said that aside from some stocks which could rise on window dressing activities by institutional fund managers, the market is expected to trade within a very narrow range.

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PNOC seen pursuing more hydro projects

By Abigail L. Hu

Bangko Sentral to further cut key policy rates in January, says DBS

Recent reduction seen not enough to stem sharp rise of peso

By Michelle F. Remo

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS may be forced to further cut its key policy rates in January in view of the strong peso's dampening effects on the economy, according to investment bank DBS.

DBS, in a paper, said the recent cut in the central bank's key policy rates might not be enough to stem the sharp rise of the local currency.

"Two aggressive helps to boost the pain of higher crude oil prices. But the ebb-or edge of the crowd is far sharper as peso appreciation takes its toll on the economy's two key pillars—consumer spending and exports—by eating into the remitted earnings of overseas foreign workers and by beating export competitiveness," it said.

In a paper entitled "Economic Markets Strategy," the research group of DBS said the BSP rates would likely be slashed further by 5 percent and 7 percent for the overnight borrowing and lending, respectively from 5.25 percent and 7.25 percent.

Lower interest rates discourage the substantial entry of foreign portfolio investments, thereby easing the buildup of the country's dollar holdings. This, in turn, will temper the peso's rise.

Last week, the BSP cut its key policy rates for the fourth time this year by 25 basis points.

In the meantime, DBS expects the economy to grow by 0.6 percent next year, slowing down from its projected economic growth of 6.9 percent this year. Its growth forecast was less optimistic than the government's target of 4.3 to 7 percent for 2009.

The investment bank's growth projection took into consideration the ill effects of a strong peso on household consumption and exports.

It said that in the first three quarters of the year, remittances sent by OFWs grew by 13 percent year-on-year in dollar terms, but in peso terms, it said the growth was only 4.4 percent due to the strengthening of the peso.

DBS said the growth in the peso value of the remittances was just a bit faster than the 3.2 percent inflation rate. This economic data not encourage aggressive household spending, the bank said.

"The consumer spending next year would likely just match the 3.7 percent growth expected this year—that is if the BSP's monetary policy would be more accommodating than the current. If not, growth in consumer spending would be slower.

In terms to exports, DBS said growth would likely hit only 2 percent next year, much lower than the government's 8 percent target. The bank's 2009 forecast for exports growth, however, is higher than its projection of only 1.1 percent for this year.

"That could, however, is that exports may be less vulnerable than consumers to the rigidities of the peso, since a significant chunk of the country's exports now go to Asia, which has experienced similar currency strengthening, albeit to a lesser degree," DBS said.

It noted that besides the strong peso, the exports sector was also disadvantaged by the easing of the growth in global demand, partly due the slowdown of the US economy—the Philippines' biggest export market.

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur C. Yap tours the Pangasinan Tropical Fruits Multipurpose Cooperative (PTFMPC) processing and packaging plant in Barangay Nalsian, Manaoag, Pangasinan, with Lito M. Arenas (left), owner of L.A. Trading and chair of PTFMPC.

What will the Senate do with Senator Trillanes

THE WORD "SENATE" COMES from the Latin senatus derived from senex, which means "elders." In ancient Rome, the Senate, or Council of Elders, served as advisers, first to the King, then later the republican magistrates. Upon the establishment of the Republic, the Senate, in which the patrician elders sat for life, dominated the State.

The Senate eventually consisted of 300 men recruited from most of the Republic. It was difficult for a presiding council, or even the Emperor, to institute important government policy, especially foreign policy, without seeking advice from the Senate. Such having asked the advice, he was morally bound to it.

Our American colonizers transplanted into the Philippines their presidential system that broke up the monopoly of power in a parliamentary system. In the presidential system, power is shared by the executive and legislative departments. Then, the latter is further divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate.

The representatives are elected by districts. We are the only country in the whole, wide world that elects senators at large. A new addition to the party list system.

With only 24 members, each serving a six-year term, counting all of two consecutive terms, the Senate is the country's most exclusive club.

President Quezon planned the Senate as a breeding ground for future presidents. He was quite a visionary. Of the 11 presidents, 10 (Quezon, Laurel, Osmeña, Roxas, Quirino, Garcia, Macapagal, Marcos, Estrada and Arroyo) ascended to the presidency directly from the Senate. The non-senators, Magsaysay, Aquino and Ramos are the exceptions that prove the rule. This is why, for some ambitious politicians, the Senate is seen as a springboard to Malacañang.

The role of senators include such illustrious names as Recto and Tañada. Jovito Salonga is considered the best president we never had.

Now comes Senator Antonio Trillanes IV. While in police detention, he accused us "elite" in a civilian court on a capital offense for leading the Oakwood military mutiny 4 years ago, he ran on the opposition slate and won a Senate seat, garnering over 11 million votes. We can write strong letters but we will not see another phenomenon like him.

His fear should have moved Trillanes to humility. If he chastised those who voted for him and concentrated on the defense, he probably would have gained more sympathy.

Alas, had he kept quiet, he would have followed the special-old senator's rule that a lunatic shouldn't elect in the wilderness during the first year of his term. It appears he does not appreciate the old sinners in the politics-ys.

Acting less and less like a senator of the realm, Trillanes walked out of the trial room during a hearing. And his contempt was outright self-gratification. Trillanes did not just insult the judge who was robed with full authority to apply the rule of law and give everyone a fair trial. He insulted his name at the highest level and the entire Filipino people.

Finally, Trillanes and his buddy, Brigadier General Lim, marched 2 kilometers to Mendiola Hotel and called for an uprising. Everybody was perplexed by the party, but nobody came.

In a few hours, the ill-conceived rebellion was crushed. What will the Senate do with a member that has disgraced one of most cherished institutions?

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Bonifacio C. Gillego

Pacific Online posts 16% sales growth to P430M

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacsare

LOTTERY EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER PACIFIC Online Systems Corp. said it had generated total sales of P408 million from January to November, up 16 percent from year-ago level.

This represents Pacific Online's share in the total sales of state-owned Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office in the Visayas and Mindanao, which stood at P4.3 billion in the first 11 months of the year.

Pacific Online is the exclusive online lottery system provider of PCSO in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Company chair Willy Ouye said the 11-month performance would bring Pacific Online's net income to P138 million this year, higher than the P58 million posted in 2006.

With the expected robust December sales, the full-year revenue is sure to rise by double digits from last year. The company's optimism was fueled by the recent roll out of new online lottery terminals and introduction of new digit games.

Lucky Circle Corp., a wholly-owned subsidiary, and its "Instant Scratch" lottery cards are performing strongly nationwide, said Ouye.

Last July, Pacific Online launched the marketing and distribution of PCSO's "Instant Scratch It Lottery Tickets."

Two months later, the company bought Lucky Circle Corp., the exclusive lotto operator via IM Sportsmedia nationwide.

Bangko Sentral relaxes rules on derivatives

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved a set of guidelines liberalizing the use of derivatives or hedging instruments to provide banks with expanded opportunities for financial risk management and investment diversification.

The BSP's policymaking Monetary Board approved last week a more liberal framework but still required dollar-borrowers to comply with certain levels of "prudence" before seeking to handle derivatives and structured products beyond the simple or plain-vanilla instruments, central bank sources said.

The sources said the BSP would determine how sophisticated an applicant bank was and issue licenses based on the array of products it could handle.

"There are levels of discipline because the Monetary Board does not want all of them taking aggressive positions—because there are what caused heavy losses (for many big banks) in the US subprime crisis," the source said.

The following are the different types of authority or licenses for handling derivatives:

- Expanded dealer authority—given to banks with comprehensive and integrated risk management and sales practices that are deemed appropriate and adequate for the level of derivative activities;
- Limited dealer authority—for banks wishing to operate only as dealers of specific derivatives products;
- Expanded user authority—for those wishing to be end-users of a wider array of financial derivatives; and
- Limited user authority—for those who want to be an end-user of specific derivatives.

In the past, banks would have to seek BSP clearance for larger-term derivative contracts.

A derivative is a financial instrument that derives its value primarily from the performance of an underlying variable. Its value changes in response to the change in the underlying commodity or index such as interest rate, price of a financial asset, foreign exchange rate, indices of financial asset prices, or interest rate or foreign exchange rates or credit rating or credit index.

Financial derivative activities also include transactions in cash instruments with embedded derivatives that reshape the risk-return pattern, such as credit-linked notes and other structured products.

After easing restrictions on foreign exchange trading and lending up to own-mapping up tools, the BSP liberalized the use of hedging mechanisms as another way of dismantling barriers to outward flow of capital since financial institutions would be more confident of exploring fresh investment opportunities once armed with a wider array of hedging tools.

Measures to mitigate adverse effects of strong peso pushed

By Rommel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE EXPORTERS Confederation is pushing for more measures that would mitigate the negative effects of the continued appreciation of the peso as well as the very serious that bring to foreign currency.

Philexport president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. said in an interview the group was calling for the exemption of exporters from the value-added tax when they buy raw materials.

"We are also supporting a proposal made by Sen. Mar Roxas II that the VAT on petroleum products be lifted for at least six months," Ortiz-Luis said.

He added that Philexport was reiterating calls for the government to consider preparing foreign loans "in a more serious manner."

"Another step that could be taken is to refrain from foreign borrowings," DBCI Lim said. "From just 70 percent of total borrowings, we could make all borrowings domestically."

Further, he said Philexport officials had engaged in lengthy discussions with economist from the Philippine Stock Exchange, Development Bank of the Philippines and the House of Representative's committees on trade and industry about allowing local investors to buy shares in companies that were not listed in the local bourses.

"This can be made through depository receipts which could help siphon off excess dollars circulating in the local market," Ortiz-Luis explained.

He said the use of DRs had to be facilitated considering that a dollar bourse under the PSE had been found impractical.

He added that trading through DRs could "increase part of the functions of the PSE, with stock brokers and fund managers playing roles in the transactions.

In an interview last November, Ortiz-Luis said the government should intervene in stop the continued appreciation of the peso amid fresh forecasts that a breakout of the real currency would further strengthen in the coming years.

He said there was still a lot that the government could do to address the trend that adversely affect hundreds of overseas Filipino workers and those whose livelihood depend on exports.

Ortiz-Luis, who is also vice chair of the Export Development Council, said the government would choose to peg the exchange rate to P47 to the dollar.

The economy could afford a 10-percent depreciation of the peso to 47-50., which would result to a marginal increase in inflation of 1.2 percent, he said.

Its debt in decline, gov't saved ₱32B in 1st 11 mos

From January to November, spending reached a total of P1.032 trillion

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT SAVED P32 billion in the first 11 months of the year, as low interest rates and a strong peso allowed it to pay less than projected interest on maturing liabilities.

According to the Department of Finance, the low interest rate environment and sharp rise of the peso have propped up the government's financial performance.

DOF data showed that the government's total spending from January to November reached P1.032 trillion. A part of it went to interest payments for interest on maturing obligations.

The amount could have been P32 billion higher had interest and foreign exchange settled at the rates projected by economic managers when they drafted this year's budget proposals.

The lower-than-expected interest rates meant the government would spend less for interest payments, both in domestic and foreign loans.

On the other hand, the appreciation of the peso translated the government's foreign-currency-denominated debts at peso terms.

Under the 2007 budget program, the P1-day Treasury bill rate was assumed to settle at an average of 4 to 4.5 percent.

But actual average for the three-month debt paper stood at only 3.4 percent.

Also, the peso was supposed to reach an average of 47 to 49 against the US dollar. But it averaged 42.796 during the period.

The lower-than-programmed spending for interest payments helped government to attain a budget surplus in the first 11 months of the year.

The 53.6-billion surplus as of November bolstered expectations that the government will attain a balanced budget, if not a surplus, for the full year of 2007—a year ahead of the 2008 schedule.

Finance officials said the low interest rate environment was due to improved macroeconomic indicators that improved the government's credit image.

Low interest rates are also expected to spur more investments next year, they added.

The appreciation of the peso, on the other hand, was due to the huge dollar inflows in the form of remittances and investments.

The peso has been one of the strongest Asian currencies so far this year.

Besides the lower-than-programmed spending, higher-than-target revenues from privatization also helped attain the surplus in the first 11 months.

The government raised a total P90 billion from asset sale this year, much higher than the target of only P25 billion. The government received no taxing power from revenues more than what was programmed to compensate for the shortfall in tax collection.

Key government assets sold this year was the 80-percent stake in PNOC-Energy Development Corp. and the 46-percent stake in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp.

Telcos brace for holiday network traffic

CELLULAR NETWORK OPERATORS Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc. and Sun Cellular said they were not short on the holiday mode of messages and advised subscribers to avoid putting the "traffic jam" of messages to avoid midnight of Dec. 31.

"The surge of text messages and calls usually peak on the 31st (of December) and there is a greater tendency to launch up to the next day's flight. The activity is more dispersed around Dec. 24 and 25," Smart spokesperson Ramon Isberto said in a phone interview.

"The traffic traditionally doubles around New Year's Eve. We have close to 18 million subscribers between the cellular providers of Globe, Smart and Sun. Imagine if all of them text at the same time," added Globe spokesperson Joanne Campos.

Smart, Globe and Sun said they currently have network operations and mobile center on standby until Jan. 2 or 3, depending on the traffic.

"We have our technical group on 24/7 duty," Sun Cellular senior vice president for legal affairs William Christensen said.

Isberto and Campos said their respective personnel were also on standby 24/7.

Constant monitoring is important because network traffic is not just coming from Metro Manila, Isberto said.

"The pattern changes a little every year, depending on where mobile phone takeup increases, how long the holiday is and where people spend their free time. This year, we have a long holiday and there will likely be a lot of traffic outside Metro Manila, especially Central and Southern Luzon," Isberto said.

"We are monitoring network traffic all day so we can execute calls going to clogged parts of the network, and if there is a physical problem, we have ready crews for deployment," he added.

Nevertheless, texters would do well to read the Sun Host's Dec 6 tip.

"If the networks get clogged, your text message may reach the recipient on New Year's day anyway. Texters can avoid frustration by texting after 1 a.m. or much earlier than midnight of Dec. 31," Campos said.

Rina T. Olchondra

In 2007, yield of fisheries sector expected to reach 4.9 million MT

By Amy R. Remo

THE BUREAU OF FISHERIES and Aquatic Resources said it was confident of hitting an 8-percent growth for the fisheries sector in 2007, with output seen reaching as much as 4.9 million metric tons.

In an interview, BFAR Director Malcolm L. Sarmiento Jr. said the aquaculture subsector, which accounts for close to half of the local fisheries sector, would ensure this for the main growth driver this year.

Sarmiento said aquaculture may grow by as much 11 percent, as the bureau had pushed for the establishment of more marine parks and hatcheries this year.

"With aquaculture's sustained growth, BFAR expects total fisheries production to reach as much as 5.1 million metric tons by 2008," he said.

Last year, the fisheries sector registered the biggest gain among farm subsectors at 6.16 percent, with production hitting 4.4 million metric tons.

The fisheries sector accounted for 2.0.82 percent of the total agriculture output in 2006, with gross earnings amounting to P163.4 billion.

It said to be output this year, BFAR jumpstarted the breeding of Pangasius, a freshwater species of catfish which enjoys huge demand from hotels and high-end restaurants, and the Pacific white shrimp, to revive the once robust local shrimp industry.

Earlier, Sarmiento said the industry could produce five million more tons if the government would allot an additional P178 million and that there would be no natural disasters or disease outbreaks.

"The additional budget would be used mostly for production enhancement and hatchery rehabilitation projects," he said.

The bureau's programs include setting up more mariculture parks, from the current 15, mostly in the Visayas.

To date, the Philippines is the eighth largest fish producer in the world, contributing to the total global production of 146.27 million MT, based on statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Tuna is the country's top export product and is shipped in many parts of the world including the United States, Japan, China and the European Union.

The Philippines is also the world's second largest producer of seaweeds, with production reaching 1.35 million MT or 11.6 percent of the total world production of 12 million MT.

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In Pesos	Less than 1 Year	1 Year
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5.0MM - 9.99MM	4.75	4.75
10.0MM and up	5.00	5.00

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Transport officials consider replacing Naia 3 contractor

By Rina T. Olchondra

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and Communication (DOTC) has fired Fraport Asia Corp. from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3 (Naia 3) project for failing to complete its work.

But the termination may not be permanent as DOTC Secretary Leandro Mendoza said Tolentino is asking for another chance.

"They submitted a letter of reconsideration," he told reporters. "Mina (Manila International Airport Authority) is studying it."

Mendoza said that, in the meantime, DOTC is looking for other contractors to undertake the work and finish the airport construction.

The department has not set a timetable for the project's completion.

"Actually, it's not really a matter of urgent exposure," Mendoza said. "What is important is to make it very, very safe."

Tolentino has not finished 2 percent of the airport's construction project because it halted work when a legal battle for ownership of Naia 3 broke out.

The government took over the terminal in December 2003 from project proponent Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco).

This, after the Supreme Court declared Piatco's original build-operate-transfer contract for the terminal void and disadvantageous to the government due to onerous changes made to the original contract.

The situation was compounded when part of the ceiling in the main terminal building collapsed in April 2006.

Then, a consortium Fraport, Asperia Ore Strip and TCCI to clinch the contract and they recommended the postponement of plans to open Naia 3 after finding serious structural defects.

Tolentino disagreed with some of the findings of Ore Strip and TCCI.

Negotiations for the remaining work has progressed at a snail's pace since then.

IFC's ₱5-B bond float hits ...

From page B4

points over the rate adjusted five-year Philippine treasury bonds.

Local investors and regulators welcome a domestic issuance by supranational institutions as this implies a vote of confidence on the country's domestic capital markets. There is also a huge demand for RDBs issued by eligible A-rated institutions.

The RDB, for instance, was supposed to issue only P4.5 billion but May but ended up doubling its offering size due to strong market demand. The RDB offering was successfully sold by 1.4 times.

Since early 2006, the ADB has completed market opening licenses to the regional treasury bond markets, including India, Malaysia, People's Republic of China and Thailand. The proceeds of the bond issue will be part of ADB's ordinary capital resources and will be used in its noncollateral operations.

IFC's plan to issue domestic bonds is the latest as another step that will contribute to local capital market development.

Liquidity in the local bond market has greatly improved, allowing supranational issuers to price their bonds reasonably following the government's ongoing program to unveil out dormant issues and replacing them with more actively traded ones.

Dollar remittances fuel ...

From page B4

Lim is hesitant to attribute the entire phenomenon to OFW remittances, but cited anecdotal evidence that the massive dollar inflows experienced this year are giving US-based dollar bills more expensive terms.

"One important indicator is the activity at the foreign exchange counters in the malls," he said. "We can see that the lines are always long and that people are always exchanging dollars [for pesos]."

BSP Deputy Governor Diwa Guinigundo acknowledges that many Filipinos earn level more affluent with the surge in dollars sent home from abroad.

He is worried that so much money is being spent on consumption, but he is also hopeful that Filipinos are starting to look toward the longer-term future—as evidenced by rising savings and investment in real estate.

"We also see people allocating more for education, and for me, this is also an investment," he said. "People should not only spend. They should also save."

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Things to do in 2008

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ARE wonderful things. Despite the fact that I've been unable to keep any of the resolutions I've ever made since childhood, new ones are still made each and every year. So what looks like a continuous exercise in futility nonetheless aren't really about achieving finishing resolutions—resolutions are about hope.

Isn't your brings the possibility of change for the better; however the plot may play out. So here's a list of things that have to be done in the coming year, that somehow my little world of cars and driving becomes just a wee bit wider.

A need to look beyond

There is a need to look beyond the tinted blinds for value-laden automobiles. Everyone in the hear will easily cover all the significant hatches from the major players. Yet there are cars out there from the smaller, second-line manufacturers that could possibly be good, solid products.

Kia's Carens CRDi looks promising. Hyundai's new Elantra diesel might be worth a long look. Heck, even Ssangyong might have a car just up its sleeve. If that last statement doesn't shock just how much I'm crying then I don't know what will.

More stressful, dangerous

Driving around the city on our daily commutes is easily ranked top 99 percent of the time monotony spend behind the wheel. Sadly, this is a segment of car driving lives that is becoming more stressful and dangerous.

New regulations and traffic schemes from the authorities such as by-out-prize, often allowing same sex-wrapping, obviously turn women for terrible collection. Even some of the rampant reduction schemes seem to have backfired, effectively reducing our main thoroughfares' number of lanes. We the motoring public should speak as we can be heard by those who make the decisions about these things.

The underbrush scourge grows as hundreds of thousands, if not millions of these cheap motorcycles are added to the streets every year. Worse still is the rise of unregulated quad and three-wheeled hop underbrush vans in areas without effective public transportation coverage. This is only vanity.

Add these to the already lethal mix of the average untrained and unfit, gilded motorbiker rider and it's no wonder coroners tell me that an average of a dozen underbrush riders are killed on Metro Manila streets on a daily basis. Something needs to be done; these things need to be talked about in the open so someone in a position of action by cars start saving lives.

On a lighter, more personal note, there is a need to drastically say sore drive. Ever since the beginning of this column, one of the main themes has been to try and put you the reader behind the wheel of significant driving experiences. Sadly this is limited by the author's own driving experience.

The unbroken avenue in expanding the driving horizons is to spend, of trying new things in order to bring the reader a deeper, richer experience. There particular disciplines call out to us. The flash and lavish world of drift is tempting with all the sideways action and the tire smoke. Four-wheel drive trailing going may beyond where the pavement ends into the heart of nature, has its appeal.

A slight possibility

In truly making enough, the long distance point it is point 0 racing shifter

MY DRIFT

Andre Fidma

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A slight possibility

In truly making enough, the long distance point it is point 0 racing shifter

on the legendary Subaru top the list. Cross your fingers and toss an eyes, toss this as there is a slight possibility that this entire might score a pay drive with a sensible team in a Southeast Asian leg of a Regional Rally Fund Series. I've packed my gear and survivors out my will in anticipation. Just assured that you, the reader, will be along for the ride, in a fully prepped Tokiso pickup likely. Everything pans out.

So there is to ladies and gentlemen, a short list of things I have to: be done and quite a few things that just need to be done. Again, in New Year's wonderment we hope for things to become better, for life to show us a year of sore instead of despair. It is only by personal effort though that our wishes will come to pass. Change starts with the individual so they say. Happy holidays to you and your loved ones, dear readers. Let us hope that we all have much more to look forward to in 2008.

PINOY MOTORSPORTS CELEBS

Christmas wishes, New Year's resolutions

Compiled by Ross R. Salazar

(For other pairs)

HOW TIME RACES BY! This year's nerves and shakers on the tracks may have crossed finish lines first so many times, but these crossadvisers, like what Mick Jagger sings, just "can't get no satisfaction."

At this end of the year pit stop for business Motoring is a glimpse of what our homegrown motorsports heroes have set their sights on for 2008.

"Pera Christmas and the coming year, I wish that the Yuasin Fly Foundation will be able to continue its medical missions and assistance to the poor. (My New Year's resolution) is to have a better attitude as a person and a race driver. I also want to win a championship next year."

— **Yuasa Dy, 28**, 2006 Philippine Rotax Formula Drive Champion, Golden Wheel International Motorsports Driver of the Year, Asian Formula Three Driver of the Year and Wheel Asian Driver to the 2007 Sha Wanda Championship

"I wish that my parents will be blessed with good health and be inspired because they have my dreams come true. I also wish that I get to the Formula Mazda's soon where my team—Dinaman Racing—has been trying to achieve. (Resolution) to be a better listener and driver."

— **Michelle Gumgumma, 15**, The "Queen" of Asian Karting and Asia's Formula Fiesta race driver

"I wish to get more sponsors for me and my sister Michela. (Resolution) To be the best Filipino driver in the Asian Formula Renault China Series."

— **Mark Gonzales, 15**, the "Prince" of Philippine Karting

"I wish to get the scholarship from DMM boss Racelabo's Manage my studies and racing career better and more from other international drivers."

— **Marlon Stockinger, 19**, 3-time Philippine Rotax Max champion and 1st Filipino to race in the top rung of the 2007 World Karting Championship

"To be able to race in Formula Ford and Drifting. (My resolution) To spread the advocacy for road safety and also be able to clinch a championship."

— **Pia Bunoz, 25**, 2007 Ford Zone Cup champion and lady drifter

Sexy toughies

Powersport #9

Safety enhanced

Honda's new G Force Control Technology introduced in 1998, also keeps the much safer performance of Honda cars in the highest standards in the world.

Not only will this provide a crash proof survival zone for the passenger but the G-Force control technology also protects the nimble road users, like cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians, during a crash.

This technology also enhances the other safety features inside the all-new CR-V including the dual supplementary restraint system and side airbag, occupant position detection system (which intelligently detects weight, height, and positioning of the front passenger so to whether to deploy the airbags or not).

Raw power

Not to be outdone, Mitsubishi made sure they also have a formidable contender in their all-new Mitsubishi Outlander.

This four-wheel-drive optioner is powered by a singularly and high-revving 230 horsepower 3.8-liter and all-aluminum engine.

Driving the all-new Outlander is more fun than you might expect, as its well-tuned chassis gives it sporty softness around corners and fantastic controllable feedback to the driver.

Once revved up, the Mitsubishi's short but Mitsubishi's innovative valve-timing electronic control system (MIVEC) makes the all-new Outlander shine powerfully and confidently.

Much focus (as the 6-speed automatic transmission with manual shift gate (Sirrocco II with Sportronic) and exaggeration also puts the Outlander on the center of attention. Shifts are quick, and the sport shifter affixed an option to drive with a bit more spirited attitude than is appropriate for a family SUV.

Perfect family vehicle

Not just for spirited driving, the all-new Outlander could also be a perfect family vehicle.

This 215,000 million compact SUV is bigger than most of its counterpart with its 4.64 meters (length) x 1.8 m (width) x 1.72 m (height) dimension.

This dimension is much appreciated since inside the car is spacious, comfortable and the back has a huge cargo space measuring 33 cubic feet.

Unlike other SUVs, the all-new Outlander's "Top Roll" (adjustable divider), with 70 percent x 40 percent and the remainder either a 60/40 down tailgate or sliver bulkhead.

In either case, each segment's weight is lighter than a pickup's tailgate or full-size lift gate, which is perfect for those who just want to quickly dump their groceries and other belongings at the back.

Of course, for larger packages that require a wider opening, dropping the mini tailgate is just a swift, simple and lightweight chore.

Rockford Fosgate

Still confused as to what crossover or SUV to buy? Then the all-new Outlander's tailored 650-watt Rockford Fosgate sound system should probably do it.

Its six 6-inch CD/MP3/Tuner with cone speakers, including a rear 10-inch subwoofer, promises to beat any manufacturer supplied audio upgrade.

Aside from the all-new Outlander, only the Starkwood, Mitsubishi's mid-sized SUV is privileged to be equipped with a Rockford Fosgate sound system.

According to Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp., mid-mid rockstar joined the all-new Outlander further in the upscale level.

TRANSPORT TRIVIA By Emman Cena

Cars go artsy fartsy

WHILE EVERYONE HEADS TO ARE glitzes up for many holiday parties, a number of cars do not lag behind in the fashion department. In fact, vehicles in some parts of the world have been transformed dramatically and quirkily, by their owners for personal artistic expression. They are called art cars.

According to www.artcarsamerica.com, an art car is a vehicle whose appearance is modified by owners, mobilizers or friend to as "Cartists." These are car artists or owners who devote a considerable amount of time and money to creating and/or displaying their cars.

Most car artists are ordinary people with no artistic training, mostly self-taught and self-funded, though some are businessmen artists like Ray Carbonie, auto and body fabrichal. The two have designed BMW art Cars and their works have been reflected in exhibitions like the BMW FILLIONE.

Art cars are unique in that no art car is "bad" or "wrong," enthusiasts say. They range from simply painted to complete bodies constructed from the ground up. For painted cars, one-shot sign enamel is a favorite due to its bright colors and high durability. Other artists have used everything from pea. Assisted artists' all paint to children's poster paint.

A SCI-FI ART CAR

A SHOE ART CAR

20,000 crabs while working as a waitress to make her "Crab Walk." She has a dress in stretch, "Jumper," by Bio Charles Linville (and he slept in cover) with everything due is had for aspects from hazardous industrial equipment to and more.

Some cars simply reflect their owners quirky personalities. The "Graffiti Beamer" by Marilyn Dreamgrave, in your 50s to play on her car that is covered with innovative musical toys. The "Duke," by Erik McKinney, transformed an old 1970s car, with antique trunks, a appearance. Celebrating his career in a writer's and roots of books.

The art car community became more cohesive in the 1990s, as the spirit of movies and books with a wide festive pierced following. The art car crisis a movement in the United States, even art car shows. The cultures was expansion throughout. Texas and the Southwest has some it outreach throughout the United States, dot car events can now be found in many major cities as well as in small country towns.

In Canada, art cars are popular in British Columbia and also in the western Canadian plains.

Otto completes purchase of stake in Galoc field

By Abigail L. Ho

SUBSTELLA-BASED DNO HEBEY Ltd. has completed its purchase of an 18.28-percent stake in the Galoc production field operated by Service Contract 14C of Northwest Palawan.

In a disclosure to the Australian Stock Exchange, Otto chief executive Alex Parks said the company was now one of the stakeholders in the SC 14C-covered Galoc petroleum field, following the completion of its acquisition of Team Oil Ltd. and Cape Energy Philippines Inc.

Cape Philippines and Team Oil each owned 72.69 percent of SC 14C operator Galoc Production Co. (GPC), with a subsidiary of the Hind Group owning the remaining 60.62 percent.

The combined shares of Cape Philippines and Team Oil effectively gave Otto an 18.28-percent share in the service contract.

GPC owns 38.29 percent of SC 14C, Australian firm Nido Petroleum Ltd. is the second biggest shareholder with a 22.26-percent stake.

Payment for the SC 14C stake came from a two-tranche share placement worth A$67.8 million ($61.2 million).

Of this total, A$62 million ($57.1 million) went straight into the SC 14C stake acquisition, including all the fees associated with the deal.

The A$5.7.8 million will be raised via placing 326 million new shares at a price of 20 Australian cents each.

"Otto is very pleased with the transaction. The revenues from Galoc's oil production will fund Otto's ongoing exploration programs, which could deliver significant oil and gas discoveries in Otto's worldwide acreage in the second half of 2008 and 2009," Parks said.

Otto expects to earn net revenues of between $90 million and $45 million from the Galoc oil field in 2008, enough to finance its working capital requirements in the next few years.

Parks earlier said that the company's "conservative" estimate of its share from the Galoc proceeds in 2008 was around $90 million, in line with the research assumptions of financial services firm Jacob.

This was based on an average oil price of around $60 a barrel, he said.

"The current oil prices, Galoc's net revenue in 2008 could be as much as $45 million from the Galoc proceeds alone," he added.

"We expect similar revenue in 2009 as production will be over four quarters instead of the three in 2008. We expect revenues to drop off a little in 2010, unless a further development well is added to the field. This will have a measurable cash flow profile going forward," he added.

He added that the company's cash flow and future working capital requirements would be supplemented by proceeds from expected gas production in Turkey starting 2009 as well as early 2009 solid potable production from the Galoc oil field in the Northwest Palawan basin in 2009.

2007: Banner Year for HARI

HYUNDAI
Drive your way

Six years since it started its operations as the official distributor of Hyundai cars in the Philippines, Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI), is a relatively young player in the local automotive scene, but its achievements are anything but juvenile. HARI's impressive sweep of major milestones both on-shores and offshores in 2007, HARI lives up to its blue-blooded name in unmitigated vitality, proving that age does not matter in making the cut above the competition—performance does.

The race to 6-8-8

"Early this year, we projected a 25% growth for 2007 and further on to 2008 set an 8-8-8 campaign to achieve an 8 percent market share with 8,000 units sales. However, with a total of 7,402 units sold ending November this year, we've surpassed this year's target with a remarkable 48% growth compared to the same period last year. And with just over 500 units away, HARI is definitely poised to clinching our 8-8-8 goal more year ahead of schedule," disclosed Ms. Ye Perez-Aguda, HARI EVP and Chief Operating Officer, during a recent interview.

"This is definitely an unprecedented year for HARI. In fact, we may even exceed the 8,000 unit mark as precipitated by the sales of the Grand Starex which have steadily grown since its introduction in September. From October to November alone, our Grand Starex sales grew by as much as 157% almost tripling the previous month's sales," Ms. Perez-Aguda revealed further.

Global distinction

For the second time, HARI continued its positioning as a globally competitive player in the automotive industry by winning the coveted 2006 Asia-Pacific Distributor of the Year award during the 2007 Hyundai Motor Global Distributors Convention held recently in Hawaii, USA.

From among 186 Hyundai distributors around the world, HARI was handed as Hyundai's best league of distributors, composed of 3 regional winners representing all 7 continents. The winners were handpicked by HMC based on a rigid selection criteria involving revenue growth, quality operations in the area of sales, service, parts, and dealership enhancement programs.

Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI), official distributor of Hyundai vehicles in the Philippines, was 2006 Asian of Excellence as Asia Pacific Distributor of the Year. In photo from L-R are: **Mr. Ji Sung Seo**, President, Hyundai Motor Company Asia Regional Headquarters; **Ye Perez-Aguda**, EVP and Chief Operating Officer, HARI; **Richard C. Lee**, Chairman Emeritus, HARI; **Sun Jae Kim**, General Manager, HMC Jeon Business Operation; and **Young Ho Hyun**, Deputy General Manager, HMC Asia Regional Headquarters.

Aside from earning the prestigious title of Distributor of the Year, HARI also ensured its mettle in the disciplines of automotive engineering when two of its expert technicians, Reggie Ramos of Hyundai Daguipan and Gilbert Dorna of Hyundai Balintawak bagged an overall ranking of Excellent Skills during the recently concluded 7th Hyundai World Skills Olympics held in Chonan, South Korea. The Hyundai World Skills Olympics is a battleground of the world's online dealership of Hyundai technicians, where competition is based on solving various "implanted" problems in the vehicles that Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) chooses. Only the best Hyundai technicians from each distributor with a certification rank of "Expert and Master" level can vie for the title as Hyundai's World Best. HARI's Reggie Ramos and Gilbert Dorna beated over 72 Hyundai technicians from 48 countries by garnering top honors, adding leverage to HARI's technical expertise in fortifying after-sales support.

Homegrown excellence

Early this year, a grand new beginning was set underway for HARI's bestselling passenger van as the Starex GRX CRDi won the Auto Focus People's Choice Award for Full Size Van. HARI again made waves in the automotive industry as the Grand Starex, barely three months since its launch, was declared Car of the Year in the Luxury Van and MPV category during the 2007 Car of the Year (COTY) – Philippines awards, once again underlining the distinction of the legendary 4th generation Starex as a leading premium people-mover in its class.

Aside from the COTY award, HARI was also bestowed with the Best Marketing Campaign award, recognizing HARI's prowess in formulating marketing strategies and campaigns to leverage the Hyundai brand in the automotive industry and bring it closer to its stakeholders. Among the campaigns that earned for HARI the prestigious award include its reinforcement of its SUV lineup, which now includes the Santa Fe and the Veracruz; HARI's introduction of the all-new Elantra; the launch of the Grand Starex at the first Philippine International Motor Show by CARIPP; HARI's Deus-Ex-Hyundai Lifestyle party, featuring the new generation Azera and Sonata, and the first nationwide debut of the Grand Starex as Legendary: The Grand Starex Exhibit.

HARI likewise gained the upper hand in the SUV market this year as CI Magazine hailed the Santa Fe as the 2007 Editors' Pick Compact 7-seat SUV of the Year. The best-selling SUV, together with the Tucson, the Getz and the Grand Starex - HARI's current bestsellers - further bolstered HARI's position as the country's Top 5 automotive brand.

With a grand ensemble of victories and accolades and a string of sales and marketing activities, capped by after-sales initiatives to keep its market base, expect the young and dynamic HARI to trail blaze a new legacy in 2008, as it continues to relentlessly drive its way to leap into the arms of the country's outstanding automotive players and the world's formidable automakers.

Barely three months since its launch, the **Grand Starex** bagged the Car of the Year honors in the Luxury Van and MPV segment and tripled its sales with a whopping 157% growth.

Starex CRDI wins 2007 Auto Focus People's Choice Award for Full Size Van

Santa Fe, one of HARI's bestselling SUVs, is hailed by CI Magazine as the 2007 Editors' Pick Compact 7-seat SUV of the Year.

Tucson, **Getz**, and **Veracruz** are HARI's bestselling nameplates in 2007, proving up Hyundai's top 5 ranking in the Philippine automotive industry.

Shown L-R: **Mr. Young-Ho Hyun**, Deputy General Manager, **Mr. Ung Sung Cho**, Deputy General Manager, Marketing & Product Planning of Asia Regional Headquarters, **Ye Perez-Aguda**, EVP and COO of Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI), and **Mr. Conrad Ma-ly**, President and CEO of HARI, celebrate Hyundai's acquisition of the Hyundai Deuss Model Lifestyle Park.

The all-new Veracruz becomes the center of attention this new generation Azera. Richard Lee (from L-R) **Mr. Young-Oh Kang**, Executive Motor Company Deputy General Manager of Asia Regional Headquarters; **Mr. Conrad Ma-ly**, President and CEO of Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI); and **Ye Perez-Aguda**, EVP and COO of HARI during the Hyundai Deuss Model Lifestyle Park.

Car Joseph Ginga, the 4,000th accredited HARI-trained **Hyundai Maintenance Campaign Award** winner for 2007 Car of the Year, from Bulacan Philippines.

Editor Cesar O. Mangarong
E-mail: pi_motoring@inquirer.com.ph

MOTORING

SPORTING an upscale design, the all-new CR-V's double-layer grille inspires new trend, great aesthetics and luxurious ambience.

THE ALL-NEW Outlander is fitted with auto-leveling high intensity discharge headlamps that does not only look cool but provides excellent visibility when driving at night.

Sexy toughies

Text and photos by Charles E. Ruivo

A COUPLE OF WEEKS BACK, this writer was able to drive two of the more popular rides in the market today, Honda's third generation CR-V and Mitsubishi's second generation Outlander.

Being crossovers, both offer the best of both worlds: the carry-carrying size of a compact sport utility vehicle (SUV) and handling of a sedan or sedan.

Well, one would also add the four wheel-drive capability which both offer (at least in the top variant of the SUV).

Being latest editions, both models were given crowning new designs, which is most evident in the all-new CR-V.

One of the strongest

As one of the strongest planets in the body rammed category, 18.5° ergonomic Honda design that the rear orientation of its top selling CR-V should be one that a dramatically

THE ALL-NEW CR-V uses a compact platform that features safety-enhancing technology.

good looking as well as well built.

The third generation CR-V indeed, adheres closely to such principles with it completely revamped body structure (for example, the unique spare tire is now found under the cargo area giving the all new CR-V classic silhouette as well as making a shorter by 7.5 cm).

Sporting a new double grille design, sweep-like front bumper and a side profile with an arched window shape accent, the all-new CR-V gives off a distinctive and upscale presence.

This writer was assigned a 2.4 automatic, the two-wheel-drive version of the all-new CR-V, which is P200,000 less expensive as well and 20 horsepower short than the P1,498 million, 2.4-liter, 4WD variant.

Endearing qualities

Notwithstanding, the variant that this writer got still exhibited several endearing qualities that pervade in those available variants of the all-new CR-V.

On the road, the all-new CR-V is sporty and very quiet, which could be attributed to the fact that the vehicle has an even more sophisticated interior and improved chassis design.

It now has a lower amount of gravity (as measured by 3.5 cm), wider tracks (increased by 2.0 cm) and a number of changes to steering and suspension geometry to instill more driver confidence.

FOR A MORE sporting drive, the all-new Outlander is equipped with a paddle shift behind the steering wheel.

YES, that's a Rockford Fosgate sound system fitted inside the all-new Outlander.

THE ALL-NEW Outlander's hatch offers two opening options as well as huge cargo space.

HONDA
The Power of Dreams

In the eyes of children, the world is a beautiful place

Our world is indeed beautiful, yet so fragile. So as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us reflect on our ways to protect and preserve the beauty and wonder of mother earth for our children and their future.

Let us plant trees whenever and wherever we can. Trees absorb harmful greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, reducing the effects of global warming.

Let us also patronize eco-friendly vehicles with low emissions.

And whenever we can, let us give our time to support environmental groups and institutions.

Through our sincere means of caring, we can say in all confidence that we have helped a good place for our children, for their future—for our world.

Your friends at Honda share with you the hopes of a brighter future this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year from Honda Cars Philippines, Inc.

HONDA

2bU To be you

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bural-Formoso
Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

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2007 Rewind

In our last issue for 2007, 2bU! hits the rewind button to look back at the year that was. Here are the newsmakers, the music, the athletes, the gadgets and the fashion that rocked your 2007

Noisemakers and scene-stealers

By Nina Mark M. Sablan
2bU Correspondent

FROM NEWCOMERS WHO ACHIEVED great career success to winners with smashed soundtrack to their names, from overnight sensations to plain attention-deprived scene-stealers, here is a list of names that made headlining scenes in 2007.

Scene-stealers

The Spice Girls. Everyone was delighted to hear that Mel, Ginger, Scary, Sporty and Baby were reuniting. So when they actually did and embarked on a world tour, tickets were sold out in no time at all. One of the biggest girl groups ever, the Spice Girls are currently touring the world, performing their greatest hits and their latest single called "Headlines."

Sanjaya Malakar. While this "American Idol" sensation raked in a lot of fans and votes, he received a lot of criticism from the show's judges and from viewers around the world as well. But whether he was loved or hated for his ever-changing hairstyles, unusual performance or hit-or-miss song-like "Reflection" by Christina and "Hanging on the World to Change" by John Mayer, there is no denying that Sanjaya is one of AI's most unforgettable contestants—all batches counted.

Teri Hatcher. It's not the last time her "Desperate Housewives" character, Susan Mayer, always gets the less-looking men in the show. What made her—or her character—controversial this year was the racial slur she said: "Okay, before we go any further, can I check these diplomas? Because I would just like to make sure that they're not from some mail-ordered niche Philippines."

Outraged Filipinos from all over the world demanded an apology. The TV network eventually backed down, issuing a statement of regret.

Sarah Hyndrington. Known as St. Peyton Roxbe to—for his TV series "Grey's Anatomy," the actor used a homophobic insult aimed at co-star T.R. Knight on the show's set. He was sent to attend counseling, and then was dropped from the show. Good riddance.

Anna Nicole Smith. The former Guess-and-Playboy model, who died from an acci-

(CONTINUED ON P2)

A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA

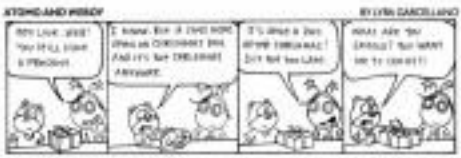
A-LIPIN — BY JOSUAMEN

PUGAD BABOY — BY NIÑO JUNIOR

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMIC AND WIDDY — BY LYN GARCELLANO



GOVERNOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

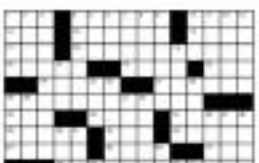
KIKO MACHINE — BY TRIXIE ASEREN

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

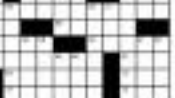
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Cigar shop
5 Hit the slack
10 Taal supporter
14 Miss Pidgeon (animated)
15 Impasse
16 Bangon Alcantara
17 Angkor
18 Author and his wife
20 Challenged
21 Cleaning agent
22 Nemo fly
24 Harriet Andrews
27 Cheshire cupid
28 Author and his wife
30 Arrows right
31 Dreams and journeys
34 Jungle cats
37 Elephants
40 Take to bed
42 Sabina jet
43 CHARISMA
44 Worthy
45 Dismissals
46 Attic Poet
47 Under the rule
48 Chicks' dads
49 Author and his wife
52 Goddess of fashion
53 Hannah leaves
55 Medical lab
57 Concession
58 Shoulder
60 Author and his wife
62 Fish relatives
66 Gem
70 Formerly D.C. Hicks
71 Take a break
72 Space
73 Solidify
74 Tolstoy

DOWN
1 Surrounded by
2 Mount Apo
3 Religious leaders
4 Blush
5 Singer of Roxy Music
6 Attempt
7 Riverside city
8 Performances' director Mendoza
9 Acceptances
10 Tie the knot
11 Den score
12 Temporarily silly
13 Finale
19 Barbecue pot
23 Ayala Alabang
25 Pastoral poem's opposite
26 Mountain system
28 Book marker
29 John Irving novel
31 Sandwich cookie
32 Actress Chanda
33 Partner's brother, maybe
35 Hit hard
36 Reluctant
38 Mount Apo's height
39 Debate
41 Ignite
43 Abdominal muscle
45 Indian fabric
47 Smoke a cigarette
50 Mountain ridge
51 Bottle cork
54 Jolly
56 Rule point
59 Greek letter
61 Indian fabric
63 Ancient
64 Ruler
65 Comic Calvin?
66 Dress something
67 Tun sharks
68 Gatherings
69 ACQUIRE
70 Tolkien word
71 Bird



Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY You have good ambitions, and because you're persevering in a methodical manner, you will live up to them. Sometimes you're a bit too critical of others, but you're usually right in your assessments. You're also not afraid to speak your mind. You're a quietly pleasant person. That's why you'll gain much thought to an important decision you're going to make this year.

Birthdate of: Dolly Parton, country singer; Henry Winkler, writer, actor; James Taylor, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Be careful not to overdo the indulgence you're much inclined to in the social scene. Avoid either extreme. You have a good idea with the tasks you do want others to be helpful. Get it?

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Be careful in financial matters or you could lose more than you gain. Be extra generous with your workmates. Treat them to lunch or get with your team and relax!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Your mind is extremely active today, to large measure. But is not enough. Intuition, not deductions, is what to rely on today.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Your self-confidence is soaring, against your better judgment. It could drive something fishy is going on. It probably is.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) Your active mind will be put to good use. Use your creativity to help others get ahead. Remember, there's no reason to be envious of others' successes or to compare with your friend's material gains.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Someone who's ambitious is annoyed with you and considers you a competitor. Just make sure you don't promote more than you can deliver. Be careful about promises you make to family members.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) Instead of getting into a heated argument, remember that you're not always right. Be less and listening more, and you will get on well. If you have problems, you have enthusiasm!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) You're jubilant about your financial prospects. The time has come to put your money where your mouth is. Make sure you don't discredit this facts to a moment of generosity and kindness.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) You might fall into a romantic trap with a loved one or partner today. It's part of a pattern that you've developed lots of time. Extra attention is allowed, especially Friday love.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Don't be overly keen that you can handle really is beyond your capabilities. Know that something looks suspicious it is. Move away from temptation.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) An inspiration gambling today. There are better ways to make money, especially playing sports. Don't make promises to children that you can't keep.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) Chaotic activity is likely to be the order of the day. Don't begin projects that you can't complete on. You'll only regret it in the end. Be careful about promises you make to family members.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis SudoKu

By Dave Green

						4	3	
				2		9	6	7
			3	8		5		2
			9	6		1	7	5
		3	2					
5	9	6						
9		4	6					
1			5					
6	2	7	3					

Difficulty Level ★★★

1229

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

5	7	4	1	6	2	8	9	3
6	9	1	8	3	5	7	4	2
8	3	2	7	4	9	5	1	6
7	1	3	9	5	8	6	2	4
9	4	5	2	7	6	1	3	8
2	8	6	3	1	4	9	5	7
3	6	8	5	2	1	4	7	9
1	2	9	4	8	7	3	6	5
4	5	7	6	9	3	2	8	1

KATHERINE Heigl

ZAC Efron

Newcomers and scandal subjects, overnight sensations and authentic talents—these are the people who hit the headlines

Noisemakers . . .

From page C2

dental overdose, opened a floodgate of questions and mysteries with her passing. Who is the real father of her daughter Dannielynn? Was she really legally married to her personal attorney, Howard K. Stern? Larry Birkhead was eventually proven to be the biological dad, but even he wasn't spared from intrigues. Questions about his sexual preference surfaced and some people started doubting his parental capabilities. Smith's psychiatrist is also being investigated for reportedly over-prescribing pills.

Chris Benoit. Sex only did the weirder, evil, romantic suicide-to-four-26 he also murdered his wife and his 7-year-old son before taking his own life. There are speculations that he was over-prescribed testosterone, but authorities are still investigating the matter.

Invasion of the young ones

Shia LaBeouf. After starring in "Disturbia" and "Transformers," this heartthrob is ready for his new blockbuster film, the new Indiana Jones movie together with Harrison Ford. Public comparisons to superstar Tom Hanks already being made about this promising actor, you just know that he'll be around for quite a while.

Vanessa Hudgens. This 18-year-old singer-actress made waves when she started in the movie/tele movie "High School Musical" and its sequel. When her nude pictures surfaced on the Internet, however, fans were shocked and disappointed. She proved to be a role model for the young actress. She eventually apologized and is reportedly still included in the Disney movie's third installment.

Zac Efron. He's got the complete package: wonderful personality, good looks, sensational charm—and singing and acting capabilities as well! The "High School Musical" and "Hairspray" star is just 20, so expect him to make a lot of people swoon for a very long time.

Rihanna. This Barbadian beauty got popular in 2007 because of two things. First is her single, "Umbrella," the extremely catchy song originally intended for Mary J. Blige, which got everyone singing "ella, ella, eh, eh, eh" and was also covered by artists such as Mandy Moore and My Chemical Romance. Second is her sharp and short haircut, which everyone seems to be sporting nowadays.

Fearless Funsters. Not only did this sweet-looking blonde finally jumpstart a successful career through the hit show "Heroes," she also became a real life superhero when she helped save a school of dolphins from slaughter in dangerous Japanese waters. And if those weren't enough, she is also rumored to be dating "Heroes" co-star Milo Ventimiglia, everyone's current crush.

The big disappointments

Britney Spears. After shaving off all her hair in a salon in California in February, the pop star attracted the paparazzi by checking in and out of rehab, precariously losing custody of her sons and then performing a very boring, disappointing and much-criticized number at the MTV Video music awards.

Jamie Lyn Spears. Britney's younger sis is proving that she can also be as controversial, with her recent revelation that she is pregnant at 18. The father is 38-year-old boyfriend, Casey Aldridge. In a tell-all interview with OK! Magazine, she says, "It was a shock for both of us, so unexpected. I was in complete and total shock and so was he. I can't say it was something I was planning to do right now, but now that it's in my lap and that CJ's coming, I have to—deal with, definitely I'm looking forward to being the best mom I can be."

Amy Winehouse. Despite finding great success in America and what love with bodies Blake Civil-Fielder, the "Rehab" singer's reputation continued to slide with a slew of cancelled performances, alcohol and drug issues, and disturbing photos of herself all bloodied, splashed on the pages of the British press.

The achievers

Chris Daughtry. Once again proving that you don't need to win the top spot in a contest just to be successful, the bald rocker with the powerful voice overshadowed his "American Idol" forebearers by making it big in 2007 with the single "Home." So far, the band has won three awards in the American Music Awards and has recently nabbed four Grammy nominations.

Beyonce. The extremely talented singer-songwriter dominated the charts in 2007 with the in-your-face single "Irreplaceable" and Grammy-nominated album, "B'Day" In fact, many people still can't stop themselves from suddenly singing "to the left, to the left," from the song "Irreplaceable." Filipinos love her even more for including the Philippines in her world tour.

Katherine Heigl. With the love office hit "Knocked Up" and her Emmy-winning portrayal of Dr. Isobel "Izzie" Stevens on "Grey's Anatomy," this blonde stunner's moment in the spotlight has already arrived.

Lauren "LC" Conrad. As the "star" of the reality-based TV show "The Hills" on MTV, this "boy's league" fashion wears thin with her charm, relatable social life, interesting love life and very enviable wardrobe. While the latest season has just ended, a new one is forthcoming, which will follow Lauren as she goes to Paris for work with silkwormer and friend Whitney.

Problematic beauties

Rachel Smith. The 2007 Miss Universe hopeful still forever be remembered by many as the contestant who fell flat on her ass during the long gown competition. She was also booed during the National Costume competition and the questions and answers portion as part over political tension between the US and Ghana, where the pageant was held.

Lauren Caitlin Upton. The 2007 Miss Teen USA hopeful's claim to infamy was her nonsensical and circuitous answer when asked why a fifth of Americans couldn't point to locate the US on the world map. Apart from reaching some four million viewers who tuned during in the contest, the embarrassing Q&A is also on YouTube, continuously clocked out by many more people.

Proud to be Pinoy

Marc Nelson and Restituto Fernandez. The athletic duo representing the Philippines in "The Amazing Race Asia 3" is still reeling in the race the last time we checked. That is a major accomplishment, considering how the Philippine representatives have only got beaten out once in the first few episodes. Who knows, they might even bring home the fat cut—while showing the rest of the world our unique Pinoy grit, humor and charm.

Charlene Pempengco. Look how far this "Little Big Star" third placer has come. Last June, she flew to Sweden to record for Ben Hoopp Productions, a music company that was impressed with Charlene's "Little Big Star" performances posted on YouTube. After belting out a remarkable song number in a Euro TV show, she also got the attention of Ellen DeGeneres, who recently had her appear and perform on her own show. That appearance garnered her rec. sessions from the obviously amazed crowd. Go, girl!

From nobodies to near-somebodies

Sitaaw Denizen. If the name doesn't ring a bell, maybe her YouTube videos of covers will. The Dutch singer uploaded her impressive versions of songs such as "Mask" by SWV and "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys online and instantly got herself millions of fans (just check out her bio), including Oprah Winfrey, who had the honor guest on her talk show, and Justin Timberlake, who signed the seventeen-year-old to his record label.

Chris Crocker. After Britney Spears's disappointing and disastrous MTV VMA performances, Britney fan Chris made a tear-filled video pleading to everyone to "leave Britney alone." He posted the soppy rant on YouTube, and the result—laughable and concerning—attracted millions of hits, lots of media exposure, remixes, and even spoofs from people like actor Seth Green. Chris has since videos where he's acting, but he claims his "Leave Britney Alone" video is the only one where he's real.

E-mail the author at starmatchmaker@yahoo.com

MARC Nelson and Restituto Fernandez

COMMUNICATIONS

INFORMATION

ENTERTAINMENT

TRANSACTIONS

FROM LAND, NOW TO AIR AND SEA, THE LEADER CONQUERS ALL THREE.

SMART, the Filipino's biggest mobile network to the world gives you another innovation—Inflight and Coastline Roaming.
So now you have the power to use your mobile phone while flying or sailing.
Call and text your loved ones as if you haven't left the ground. Available to all roaming subscribers.

COASTLINE ROAMING

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Manx Maritime, Isle of Man • Maritime Communications Partner (MCP), Norway • Vodafone, Malta
Siminn (on-waves), Iceland

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Brittany Ferries • Majestic Cruises • First Cruise One
Costa Cruises • SuperFast Ferries • MSC • P&O Ferries
Pullmantur/RCI • Minoan Lines • Grandi Navi Veloci
Elysion Cruises • Anek Lines

INFLIGHT ROAMING

Available on the following airlines:
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Coming soon: RyanAir, Air Asia, BMI (UK) and TAP (Portugal)

SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

LIFESTYLE

MIGUEL Molina swims his way to victory.

Highs, lows and sensations

Young athletes dominated the sports headlines this year

By Jasmine W. Paya
Sports Reporter

WHEN FILIPINO CHESS sensation Wesley So repeatedly emerged as the awesome youngest Grandmaster in the world, the feat turned out to be a fitting highlight in a year when young athletes dominated the sports headlines.

So, a high school sophomore in **marvelously** nurtured the coveted grandmaster title at 14 years old, **one month and 20 days.**

"I'm very happy. This is already a beautiful Christmas gift for me," said So, who also holds the distinction of being the country's youngest chess Olympian at 12.

Just a week later swimmer Miguel Molina made waves by winning the Most Valuable Player plum in the 24th Southeast Asian Games after a dominating pool performance.

The 23-year-old Molina captured four gold medals by **n**ailing the 200-meter and 400-meter individual medley, the 200-meter breaststroke and the 4x100 medley relay.

Also making a big splash were Mariel Coddet, the 17-year-old great grandson of rare-coin **b**uff Mariano Trofilo Medrano, scooped a gold by shattering the 60A Games 50-meter freestyle record.

Nineteen-year-old Jil Walsh also came up with a record-breaking performance in the 200-meter butterfly while another teen, 18-year-old Pinoy Ariescis, pocketed two golds in the 800-meter backstroke and 1500-meter freestyle.

"We know that we can compete in the world level," Philippine Amateur Swimming Association president Mark Joseph said of the four swimmers, who all qualified to compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Top marksmen

The Philippine team that competed at the 2007 Australian Practical Shooting Championships in Batu**ta**ya, Thailand this month also gave Filipinos a big reason to celebrate.

The team captured the overall Open Team Division title leaving Australia in second place and Czech Republic in third. The Philippines' Jethro "Jag" Lejano, who was the **m**ultiled division champion of the 2005 World Shoot in Ecuador, captured the overall open division title, hitting 600 marksmen from different parts of the globe.

Four other Pinoys placed high on the list of top marksmen: Stephen Hinojales was fourth, Jerome Morales was fifth, Malvern Ortega was ninth and Carlos Fangonilan was tenth.

Morales also bagged the top

TEEN class sensation Wesley So

place of the Open Division, while the 19-year-old Ortega was the big winner for the Australian Junior category.

Varsity action

Most basketball-loving Pinoys, of course, got glued to varsity action as school pride ran high during the UAAP and NCAA basketball competitions.

Teams embroiled in many feuds (the UAAP season, yo) it was the La Salle Green Archers that came out vindicated in the final frames.

The Green archers rebounded from a scandal with a champ**i**onship powered by a turned crew led by TY Tang, Chido Villanueva, JVCasio and Ron Pinarbrew.

"It was a roller coaster season for us," said coach Franz Pumaren of his Archers, who rose from a one-year suspension resulting from a bartowing eligibility case. "Super**s** stars was glaringly in our favor (during the Finals). My players are servants of many wars."

Pumaren, however, celebrated at the expense of his younger brother Diodo's University of the East Red Warriors.

"If only we can slice the trophy, I think the UE Red Warriors deserve the other half," said Pumaren.

Indeed, the squad that looked poised to become Acenty's darling **faltered as the Warriors struggled** in the Finals after an amazing 14-0 win**s** carousel in the eliminations round.

But the Green Archers also had to deal with their fervent rival, the Ateneo Blue Eagles, in a rare five-game saga before bagging this year's championship.

Despite winning only twice against their crafty rival foes, the Green Archers reward up the crucial win to advance to the Finals.

"This is the only time that one is greater than three," said Franz. "They beat us three times, but we beat them when it counted the most."

Game fixing

Over at the NCAA, the San Beda Red Lions dominated for the second straight year by sweeping the Letran Knights in the championship round.

Ogie Menisa, 6-foot-9 Nigerian **f**rom Ilocos and Greg Slaughter starred anew for the Red Lions, who lost only once—by just by a single point—during the entire season.

Yet it was the league's controversies that grabbed more attention with the arrest of a star player for alleged game-fixing tapping them all.

St. Benilde guard Pablo Olivera got arrested by the National Bureau of Investigation in an entrapment operation along with three other suspects last August.

The league, however, maintained it was an isolated case. "It's an eyesore for the NCAA. The incidents were just a private deal between two people that had gone awry," said St. Benilde athletic director Henry Atanda.

The Philippine team, though, made up for any shortcomings in the basketball scene by ending the year with a golden performance in the SEA Games. Led by FilAmerican Gabe Norwood, the 30-quinter secured the six-nation field by an average of 48 points.

Pet sport

In the Pinoys' other pet sport, boxing, a bevy of stars remained top-bill by national icon Manny Pacquiao.

The 28-year-old "People's Champion" again captured the hearts of a fawning nation by donning welterweight Mexican fighters Jorge Solis and Hector Antonio Ramirez this year.

Capturing the enthusiasts' interest as well were mini-flyweight Rowenie Garalde and flyweight Nonito Donaire, two underdog Filipino boxers who clinched world championships—less than 24 hours apart—in separate bouts in Indonesia and the United States in one rousing weekend.

A number of young boxers also caused ons like Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista and AJ "Bazooka" Banal for similarly bustling lightweight potential.

Many other national athletes provided inspiring moments amid the Philippines' dismal sixth place finish and controversial boxing walkout in the SEA Games, with the stellars of Efren Bamboven tennis ace Cecil Mamiit, archer Ameyra Paz, and relay standouts from softball, boxing, athletics, cycling, billiards, dance sport, rowing, diving, judo, taekwondo, duathlon and wushu.

And as swimming's Mark Joseph succinctly stated: "This just goes to show that the Filipino does not lack the genetics to succeed."

PINOY prides in Penaya, Thailand: Stephen Hinojales, Blairette Ortega, Jerome Morales and Jethro Lejano

THE YEAR IN MUSIC

Dream and nightmare reunions, a free album ar

By Christine Bissel Bautista
INQ7 Correspondent

This is the year that hell froze over and albums came for free

THE GET A HEMBE OF MUSIC IN 2007, you never see look further than Top 40 radio, which, in this country, translates to practically every radio station playlist you own: those that ask if it's too early for Christmas.

In the near future, when a "decade of 2000" category pops up in Jeopardy!, it would probably read like a laundry list of hits from acts such as Rihanna, Justin Timberlake, Bill Ott Boy and Akon. But really, there's more to the music scene since this is the year that hell froze over and albums came for free.

Earth-shattering

Just like Eagles did early on, and the Police quite recently, a number of influential bands dusted off their instruments for destruction tours.

The biggest of the year, and perhaps the most earth-shattering, was the refurbishment of rock gods Led Zeppelin. The band, which now has Jason Bonham, the son of longtime drummer John Bonham, on the skins, recently played their first concert in 27 years in London's O2 Arena. Page, Plant, Jones and Bonham left their fans one message at the end of night, "We were the best, and still are."

It is still unclear whether the one-night-only show would translate to a full-blown tour. There are encouraging signs, though, with rumors of the band to table to play at London's Wembley Stadium and at New York's Madison Square Garden. The latter was the site of their concert film "The Song Remains The Same."

Another group that got back together was The Police, which reunited early in the year in celebration of their 30th anniversary. The group unveiled their reformation by playing at this year's Grammy Awards. They played "Roxanne," their first hit single in the States.

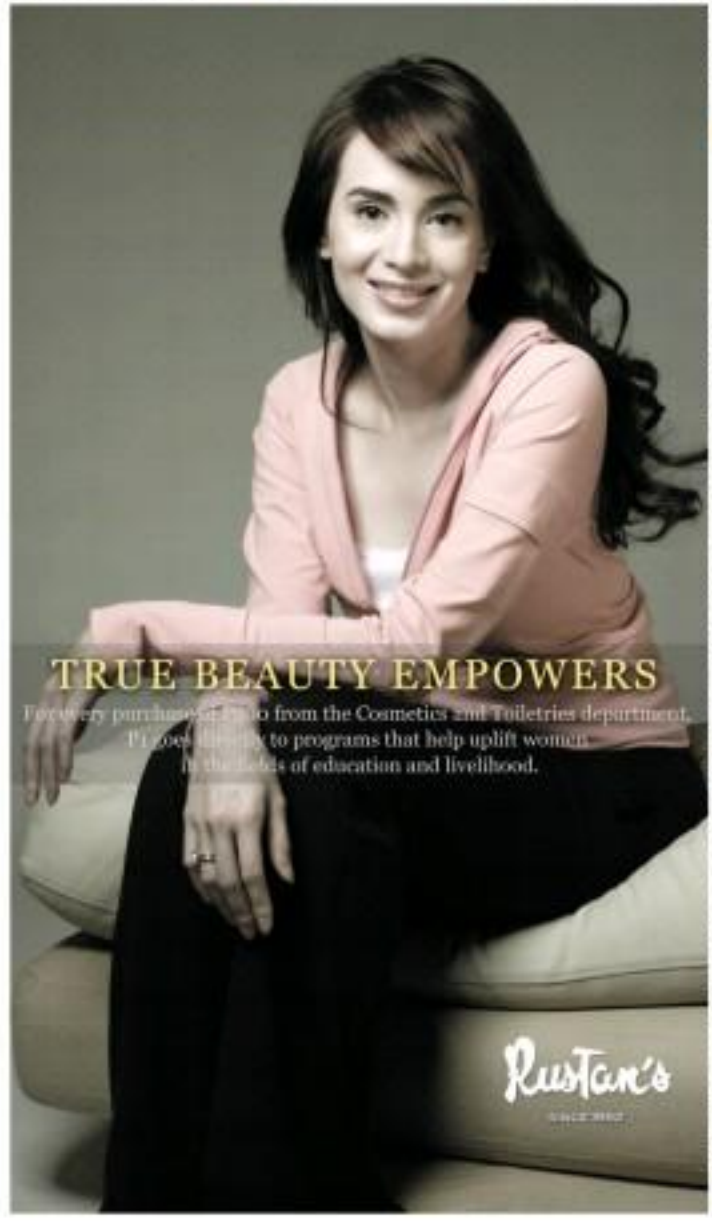
The Police opened their reunion tour, their first since 1984, in May in Vancouver. They will swing by Southeast Asia on Feb. 6, 2008 as a chaser in Singapore. Oh, and by the way, Sting, Andy Summers are also back together.

Sadly, the reunion bug also hit The Backstreet Boys, Take That and the Spice Girls, bear we only need to wait for the fledgling libraries to break up so we can say we've seen everything.

Survival board

Radiohead recently released its seventh studio album "In Rainbows." The price? Whatever you feel like paying.

The seminal Oxford-based band, which has scored hits with its past three albums... "Kid A," "Amnesiac" and "Hail to the Thief"—have left it to fans to decide how much the new album is worth. The 10-track album, available since mid-October on the band's website, can be obtained free of charge. A CD version of the album was released in early December.



The 2007 T

Playing m

By Jayvee Fernandez
Correspondent

MICROSOFT IS A LUMBERING JUGGERNAUT [illegible] Windows Vista, but is doubling [illegible] to train 5 miles. The XBOX 360 rules [illegible] great new games, while the Wii outperforms [illegible] of snappy games during the latter part of 2007.

Apple commands an [illegible] owning per earning [illegible] the iPhone release, while the Mac business grew [illegible] quarterly to Macintosh OS X Leopard. The Internet is still democratic, with a huge rise in blogs and "social networking" services. It's the Internet is also not dominated by people realize that Google can flip your [illegible] PageRank with a push of a button.

Google is the new Microsoft. Linux is the new Mac [illegible] tech. Now, everybody wants an Asus eee laptop [illegible] P15,000.

When even components shifting, the good guys [illegible] becoming the evil empire and the one is going to [illegible] remains this same up technology in 2007. Let's do it!

Ask what you can do for Vista!

Did you know that it takes 48,167 days and 227 [illegible] to burn a CD on Windows Vista? I bid you not. But [illegible] using third-party applications, it should only take [illegible] 15 minutes.

Windows Vista has been cited by numerous [illegible] critics as a horrendous "downgrade" from the previous version. Sure, it's only to it less stable, it renders a [illegible] number of your peripherals incompatible. If you're [illegible] thing Vista, I suppose you "upgrade" to Windows [illegible] much more astute and it hogs less of your system's [illegible] routines.

I'm even going to go as far as to saying that the Vista [illegible] version you find in your flea market is way better [illegible] you can install it an unlimited number of times. Crippled [illegible] versions of Vista only allow you to install the thing [illegible] three times. Excessive? Nah.

The truth is, you can only innovate so much. [illegible] take the Nintendo Wii that brought down the house [illegible] and is still [illegible] 2008.

The XBOX 360 (and PS3) overtook the Wii in Japan [illegible] November. This was mostly due to Sony's PS3 [illegible] (which raked over $100 million for Microsoft in the first week), but it also had lots to do with the fact that the Wii game does have been releasing products [illegible] why too much on the innovative accessorizers made [illegible] Nintendo.

It was fun as one point, but later on you [illegible] realize stupid cheap entertainers with the Wiimote [illegible] it would have been easier—and more fun—[illegible] pass-a-banana, old-school style.

When the silks goes mainstream

Bob Cratlit, well-known marketing wizard[illegible] called how he once stepped into Starbucks and [illegible] at least five guys with white MacBooks. Five guys.

It's interesting to reflect on how Apple used to [illegible] itself as a company that catered to those [illegible] dared to be different. But when you find a significant [illegible] of people in a coffee shop already using a product [illegible] not that supposedly caters to the "rebels first," [illegible] you might have to rethink your marketing strategy.

While it's risky, Apple has ventured into the realm of consumer electronics, first with the iPod, then with the iPhone. [illegible] TV and soon with the iPhone.

You see, apple got it right with the iPod, as it was [illegible] reluctant to having to carry your entire music collection in your pocket. Its sister MP3 player in the year 2001 was able to do that, and Apple was's hefty [illegible] gadget-clan one up on your pockets.

The iPod revolutionized portable music. The iPhone works the same way. With so many phones [illegible] clamored out by the big manufacturers—Nokia, Motorola, Samsung, you name it—none has come close to [illegible] by delivering a user experience that "feels right."

Want proof? Did you know that the iPhone Safari [illegible] browser holds a 8.1 percent market share [illegible] pages on the internet? How significant is that? Perspective check: That is actually a lot more than all the [illegible] devices (Mobile phone browsers' market share per [illegible] or (actually is around 0.06 percent).

The iPhone, which sold 900,000 units in its [illegible]

nd no shoot-outs

Rapper duel

A dispute between two rappers that was sealed by album sales doesn't you just love the good old days when they would just shoot each other?

Kanye West and 50 Cent faced off in the billboard charts in their albums—West's "Graduation" and 50 Cent's "Curtis"—never mind who's up two spots, in the end, West won. Or maybe, prompting 50 to go back off those his mother promised of smoking if he got defeated.

Pete Sport and Jake
Oliver's album
This Quadio Bird's hidden charm
My summer folk-pop is blooming
Ishmael
Oh Love To Admire
Just the last final attempt has a new album makes this a good year for music.
The White Stripes
Icky Thump
Missed Jack's last one in 2003's "Elephant."
Mac Faty
A Mind made in The City

And it possible to make a good sophomore album.
Kasabian
Alchemy of the Mice Patient
Tony didn't win the Mercury Music Prize for nothing.
Killers
Sam Flood & Stunt
Find work placed that is satisfactory.
Arctic Monkeys
A surprisingly critical slightness a More from those brilliant dudes.

Notice this list: The Killers, Bishop Briggs and Arcadia

Technograph: musical chairs

The good guys are becoming the evil empire and the cult is going mainstream: this sums up technology in 2007

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As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years, with young people favoring more exciting, dressy clothes

A more adventurous year

By Bianca Consuegra
2007 Correspondent

THE YOUNG FASHION SCENE WAS decidedly more grown-up in 2007, with more people opting to skip the casual duds and jeans in favor of more adventurous, dressy clothes.

As a whole, 2007 fashion was slightly more formal than the previous years, flip-flops were no longer must-have pieces, as proven by the diminished lines at Hawaiian stores.

Instead, ribboned flats, patent-leather heels, wedges and (fun) gladiator-type sandals took center stage. For the celebrity connoisseur, Melissa Abate became the fashion mavin here for the year.

Weary of the underdressed look that was popular for the last two years, fashion conscious youth brought out the claps in 2007. They were jointly joined by the popularity of tights and stockings, which made a tremendous comeback this year.

While black tights and leggings were still prevalent, colourful ones raged for bright shades such as pink, red, and orange. Often worn with high-heeled shoes or Mary Janes, stockings made effortlessly-chic outfits refined.

Layering, particularly with vests and polo shirts, was also a key trend. While dresses have become more popular than ever, menswear also prevailed over the level of comfort. Popular dresses and basic shirts were everywhere at the start of the year, but the second half of 2007 saw the influx of more tailored pieces. Structured blazers, and crisp white shirts were worn in summer with touches such as ribbons and ruffles. Pebbled sheers, oversized buttons and ruffled collars added a touch of sass to otherwise plain shirts.

In line with the preppy trend, sweaters worn out knits were also big in the past year, especially with college guys and preppie chicks with boogie-to-book messenger, while always a staple with high-school and college kids, were mainstream this year.

The disappearance of skinny jeans made thousands of girls around the world breathe a sigh of relief. Unflattering except on a select few, they were replaced with palazzo and cigarette pants.

On the other hand, the return of high waists launched a hundred duds, although the trend wasn't widely saluted.

Accessories such as hats (berets, fedoras, bowler hats), skinny belts, suspenders and ribboned necklaces spiced up the outfits of teens and young adults worldwide, if not always loudly. Brighter and bolder made outfits glamorous, and dark colors ruled the last quarter of the year.

The influences of the 80s was commendable in the year's fashion offerings. Jet-your-face denim and bold color were prevalent in 2007, although there were already glimpses of the 90s (with loose pants and turtlenecks).

As a whole, however, the year showed the adaptation of the trends of those two decades (such as 80s dresses paired with loud stockings), with a few updates here and there.

E-mail the author at bianca.consuegra@ateneo.edu

The 2007 . . .

Power page/99

weekend, has already won the Internet war against AOL (the only to HTC) and XDA) out there within barely five months of release, whereas Windows Mobile has been around for more than three years.

That's the iPhone, but what about the Mac? As Bloomberg.com's staffing to Mac OS World magazine has declared the best computer is not Windows... a Macintosh...how come is that?), the "choose few" are tracking forward to the dawn of a new "club" of mini laptops.

You might have seen these around—the ASUS branded "eee" notebooks that go from anywhere between P9,000 to P17,000. They run Linux, an open source operating system that brings a different sort of prestige to it's fans. It's free, but isn't anything near mainstream. That is, until maybe a decade or two months.

Web: so many people having these things, tech sites and blogs have been posting Linux 101 crash courses to help get back their way through the software. All of this, to say/see via blog and podcast from anywhere.

At blogs gurus at a cozy panoramic number, so do the social networking sites. Facebook is live worldwide. Friendster is still the mainstream site back home. Your online reputation is becoming more valuable to your next employer, yes, HR departments do search for your name on Google.

People forget that setting up blogs and social network profiles have some impact on one's online reputation and identity. Like, for instance, the wildfire spread of videos of the Make Eve number controversy. Sorry, but it can't be helped. These days, your online rep is as good as your real life.

Some lessons

Three things I learned this year from the technology industry:

1. You can't stay with your core competence forever at some point, you would have to innovate. That isn't the '80s anymore. Things move just too damn fast.

2. You can't have your business model rely on just one system. Live in point: Bloggers were relying on Google's PageRank system to rules link selling. Plums. Google screwed up the system by penalizing link sellers, a lot of non-2 professional bloggers lost a significant amount of income.

3. Microsoft should stop making operating systems and stick to making games.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Edric Bronio C. Valente

Christmas wish for Philippine television

WHAT if everybody would want to use it in Philippine television to look upon itself as an opportunity to serve the people, to present everything as a means to get closer to God and not to keep sliding towards hell or evil. The desire to show only what sells or to keep maximizing profit is one form of evil. If local networks could bring themselves to espouse Gospel values in creative ways, they too can truly say local TV is world class. —Fr. James B. Reuter, S.J.

TAYLOR HICKS thinks Mariah Jones has a huge, youthful voice, especially on previous and "open talents," a lot of good. AP/AAAS

Just happy to play music for a living

By Pocholo Concepcion

AS A CHILD OF DIVORCED PARENTS, record lifestyle victim Taylor Hicks found solace in music. He fell hard for Irish artists, getting to watch them in concert convinced him that he should follow their lead.

For 10 years, Hicks toiled as a professional singer, making the rounds of bars and clubs (even parties) around the southeastern states, including those near his hometown, Alabama.

Though he wasn't signed to any label, he already had two albums—"In Your Time" and "Under the Radar"—both self-produced, prior to his self-titled major label (Arista/Sony BMG) debut which came after he became the 2006 American Idol.

Despite worldwide attention following his triumph, Hicks remains grounded and doesn't mind being referred to as the oldest or least likely-looking Idol. What he's most proud of, simply is being a musician.

How did your parents' divorce affect you?

Any child who goes through a divorce has to find a happy place. For me, music was that happy place. It became my passion and outlet for my feelings.

How did you find the music that you love?

I first heard Sam Cooke and Otis Redding on the radio, in a program called AM Gold.

Was there a conscious effort to emulate them influence?

Yeah, but once you have all these great artists and musicians, you want to leave something for yourself. That's when you try to take off and create your own music.

What was the biggest difference between your first two independent albums and the major label debut?

The first two were my music, songs that I've written. The third had other songwriters and producers. That was a great learning experience which helped me become a better recording artist.

How do you rate the first two albums?

I think the first one definitely needed some work. The second one was the better attempt. And the third was me understanding what I'd like to have a bigger production.

You described The Hits album as organic.

What I tried to accomplish was take some of the organic influences and cross them over with pop sensibilities. I think I got a good shot at it.

What band or solo artist, do you think, has been very influential these past few years?

TAKE FIVE

PAGE 11

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FULL STADIUM SEATING		
SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	ENTENG KABISOTE 4	RESBAKLO
12:20 | 2:45 | 5:10 | 7:35 | 10:00	12:40 | 3:05 | 5:30 | 7:55 | 8:40	12:40 | 3:05 | 5:30 | 7:55 | 8:40

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JANUARY 10 TO 27, 2008

Just happy to play music . . .

from page E1

I think Norah Jones brought us back closer to earth commercially with "Don't Know Why." It allowed songwriters and people with good musical talents to be heard on radio, as opposed to the more "produced" sounds. For me, personally, it's Ray Le Mon reigne. He's a great soul singer.

Do you remember watching a concert that changed your life?

I was 6 or 7 when I saw Lionel Richie and Tina Turner in concert. Seeing those two performers, right off the bat, didn't hurt anything.

You look more fashionable now. Do you have a stylist?

I go shopping and comb my hair just like everybody else. But you know what? I take that back. Grow very little do I comb my hair, although I put gel in it.

Have you ever thought of dyeing your salt-and-pepper hair?

No, I would be scared to. Jim (that's his name) nobody would know who I am.

What if it all turns white?

Then I may have to reconsider.

You were referred to as the oldest American Idol in the early part of the contest. Did that affect you?

You could say I was the oldest and the wisest! I knew it was up to America to vote. Some of the judges' comments, I just let them roll off my back.

Clive Davis (record company boss) signed up

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GLORIETTA 1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 BAHAY KUBO	3 KATAS NG SAUDI	4 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO
GLORIETTA 4	1 RESBAKLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	
	4 KATAS NG SAUDI	5 BAHAY KUBO	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	7 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9
GREENBELT 1	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	2 RESBAKLO		
GREENBELT 2	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 BAHAY KUBO		
	3 KATAS NG SAUDI	4 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	2 BAHAY KUBO		
	3 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	5 RESBAKLO	
AYALA CENTER CINEMA	1 BAHAY KUBO	2 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 RESBAKLO
MARKET! MARKET!	1 BAHAY KUBO	2 KATAS NG SAUDI		
	3 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	5 RESBAKLO	
TRINOMA	1 RESBAKLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SARAL, SARAH, SARLOLO	4 KATAS NG SAUDI
	5 BAHAY KUBO	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL 9	7 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — Taylor Hicks Live! — December 19, 1pm; Glorietta 4 Park

Greenbelt — Taylor Hicks Live! — December 19, 1pm; Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Carnaige Boutique Live! — December 22, 4pm; Town Plaza

Ayala Center Cebu — Christmas Chorale featuring Madeliñes — December 20, 7pm; Activity Center

Market! Market! — Japan Foundation Karate Demonstration — December 16, 6pm; Activity Center

Christa's — Repertory Philippines presents "A CHRISTMAS NOTE (MUSICAL)" — January 11 to 27; For reservations, pls. call 887-3719; or visit www.repertoryphilippines.com

Ayala Museum — MUSE: THE MUSEUM by Jerome Kuros — November 24 to January 13, 2008; Ground Floor Gallery; For more info, pls. call 757-7117 or 811-3181; or e-mail museum_inquiry@ayalamuseum.org

Tsi Nonna — Taylor Hicks Live! — December 20, 1pm; Activity Center

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Adidas
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Gift Mall
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GALLERIA

1 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO + THX	6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 KATAS ng SAUDI	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL
3 RESIKLO	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	9 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
5 BAHAY KUBO	10 RESIKLO

ERMITA

1 RESIKLO	6 BAHAY KUBO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI	2 RESIKLO
5 RESIKLO	3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

METRO EAST

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
2 BAHAY KUBO	6 KATAS ng SAUDI
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 RESIKLO	8 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

NOVALICHES

1 RESIKLO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 BAHAY KUBO	7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI	8 RESIKLO

PIONEER

1 RESIKLO	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO	4 KATAS ng SAUDI

STA. ROSA | **LIPA**

STA. ROSA	LIPA
1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTANG KABISOTE 4	4 ENTANG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 BAHAY KUBO

DASMARIÑAS | **IMUS**

DASMARIÑAS	IMUS
1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

ANGELES | **TARLAC**

ANGELES	TARLAC
1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	6 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
2 BAHAY KUBO	5 RESIKLO
3 KATAS ng SAUDI	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

BACOLOD | **ILOILO**

BACOLOD	ILOILO
1 RESIKLO	1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9	3 BAHAY KUBO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 BAHAY KUBO	5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 KATAS ng SAUDI	6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

Gary V stretches his limits

He's giving acting another go

XANDY IN HIS SHOW HIS CAREER, RAMY Valenciano acted in a couple of movies. Later, however, he chose to focus on his singing career, to great acclaim.

What about acting? It didn't come as naturally to him as singing, composing and dancing. Besides, he hesitated to play "negative" roles, because it might set the wrong example.

Others chose to disagree, however. They pointed out that even negative characters could have a "teaching" effect, because they show young viewers the path not to take.

In addition, evil is dramatically useful because it provides an instructive contrast to goodness. If only goodness is portrayed in drama, they wouldn't benefit from the characteristic highlighting that negative characters can provide.

Convict role

Interestingly enough, after many years spent concentrating on his music career, Gary V has been giving acting another go of late. In the 2007 Cinemalaya festival, he played a featured role in "Colorum," written by Jeanne Lim and directed by Jackie Fernandez. And, just last Dec. 14 on Channel 23's "Maalala Mo Kaya," he portrayed a convict.

Gary V as a convict? Hey, wait a minute, we thought he didn't like playing negative characters? Well, it turns out that Gary's concern only wasn't such a stretch, after all, because he was interested of the colour he was assigned to.

Still, the conflicted convict was a different kind of (small) screen persona for Gary, and he should be encouraged to play more such "dark" and "tortured" characters.

Not that Gary was completely relu-

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

tant in the role. To his credit, the singer-actor looked rough and roughed for the part. But, the character's more impressive inner struggle and pain generally eluded him, and his performance looked the later and later it needed to be completely credible and moving.

Unmapped territory

Pity can say the same of his short but portrayal in "Sisiwag," where he was musical. Despite those lines that overwhelmingly positive notes, however, we feel that Gary has reached a new plateau in his performing career by playing characters less stereotypical than himself, and it'll be interesting to explore this relatively unmapped (for him) territory, it could eventually result in a great performance.

To make this likelier, Gary should strive to understand the "dark" characters he plays beyond the way they look, speak and behave. Some fear that this could be difficult for him, since he may live in a "protected" (in the anti-spiritual environment, and doesn't really make it a point to observe "ordinary" people whose they live and breathe.

But he has to make up for this lack, because this direct observation and emotional involvement are essential in coming up with naively believable and gritty performances, which are the hallmarks of competent and insightful characters.

This piece of unsolicited advice also goes out to other well-intentioned actors who fall short on points of credibility and empathy. They need to go beyond superficial details to understand the positive and negative impulses of the characters they portray.

Just happy . . .

From page 11

Chris Daughtry (AMT Al fourth placer) even earlier than you.

Chris deserves all that. He's a rock singer and competitor. Considering how popular rock music is right now, that's a no-brainer.

Before AI, you spent time in Nashville pursuing your music career, although it didn't pan out.

I was trying to make it for 10 years. I did everything possible and created every opportunity just to make it. I thought Nashville was a good place for me, at the time, to be heard. It taught me a lot about myself.

Are you proud to be called a white soul/R&B singer?

I'm just proud to be a musician, to play music for a living.

How do you see yourself 10 years from now?

Completely white hair. But hopefully still playing music, touring, maybe writing here with you for another interview.

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING
OPENS SOON!!!

Lessons that 2007 taught the stars

IT'S THE DAY AFTER Christmas. Time to unwrap our gifts and celebrate our hearts. As we anticipate the coming of the New Year, let's look back on the lessons that 2007 taught us, as these Inquirer.net celebs did.

Lorna Tolentino: "Everything is in God's hands. We can do our best but in the end, it is all up to Him. We must learn to keep believing."

Marvin Agustin: "Luck can be created. The harder you work, the luckier you will be. I also learned to value friends and relatives more than anything in this world."

Miriam Quiambao: "The greatest lesson I learned this year is about forgiveness and accepting. Acceptance of what has happened and of what is. Forgiving mistakes of the past and most of all forgiving myself. That made me love myself more."

Heather Bumagat: "I've learned to forgive quickly and never to regret anything I've done."

Christine Reyeles: "When you are a model and trained for God's blessings to pass through, you shouldn't fear because God always provides."

Jean Javier Reyes: "Life is an experience both humbling and challenging. It is all a matter of learning your lesson each day."

Rachel Alejandro: "I was always a bit of a worrier and tried very hard to make sure things go the way I planned. This year, I learned that instead of preparing for the worst, I should anticipate only the best. Whatever I set my mind on, I can achieve if I really believe."

Christian Bautista: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart no matter what happens."

Paloma Concepcion: "God is always in control even when your life seems so far out of control. You just have to let it sway but don't go to Him."

John Estrada: "No two women are the same. You can't love one the way you loved another. Every girl has different needs that are quite unique."

Pula Rosales: "Blessings become more meaningful if you share them with others."

LORNA Tolentino

MARVIN Agustin

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

POLO Ravelo

Stars at the mall

Join the festivities on Dec. 30 at Sta. Lucia East Grand Mall, when it welcomes in the New Year with Cecelia, Nadine Samonte, Private Parents and Calladita. The pint-sized farmers will be joined by the winners of Generation Star Model Search, the Search For Little Stars and

CHRISTIAN Bautista

Gift idea

Have you given everyone your Christmas list a gift? Consider an Jerome Magic Sing mic. It comes with a free song chips—and raise lessons from Center for Pop (Ell Jan. 11. That's Karaoke with a twist.

E-mail answering@inquirer.net.ph@yahoo.com.

Cinema board gives 2 films 'B' rating

By Marinel R. Cruz

A FILM ABOUT TWO COPS WHO UNDERgo SWAT training, and another about a young man who goes to prison after accidentally killing a boy, each received a "B" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board.

Director Apollinario's "Banal" gave the judges' nod for "correct portrayal of the movement of Philippine media," according to CEB chair Dinnalene Bayot.

"Banal," an entry to this year's Metro Manila Film Festival, tells the story of two policemen, the idealistic Cris Ebolo (Coco Martin) and the scheming and corrupt Jason (Dilford Vargas), who forget an unlikely friendship while in training.

The film, produced by CineGalaxy Films, "sets a new tempo for Pinoy action films," said a CEB board member.

First-time filmmaker Apollinario has a "firm grasp of the material," said Bayot, giving a CEB reviewer. The movie is "well-researched," she added.

Almost an 'R'

"Banal" would have gotten an 'R' grade, had the rolling been "tighter," the CEB chief said.

"Banal" also features Christopher de Leon, Pablo Pattugo, Joey Smith, Lee Marquez, Boy Alvarez, Cino Pertl, Ian Magno and Evangeline Pascual.

A B rating entitles a movie to a 65-per-cent tax rebate, said Bayot.

The CEB Board describes Pablo Villabona and Ellen Rennet "Salsa" as "a beautifully filmed musical piece."

"It's like watching a fluid Amorsolo painting [while] depicting the harsh realities of being in jail and the even harsher pains outside," said Bayot, quoting a CEB reviewer.

"Salsa" tells the story of Rommel (Mel Lazarte), who accidentally kills a boy and is imprisoned. He befriends fellow inmates, Esteban (Emilio Garcia). Seven years later, Rommel is living in the province as a farmer with Ana (Ana Mitra). An ardent Esteban tracks down Rommel in hope of reviewing a learning love affair. Rommel and Ana encourage Esteban to go back home, "until their runaway crosses borderlines and results to the unbelievable revenge of self-discovery."

The movie is a follow-up to Villabona and Rennet' highly acclaimed romantic drama "Bonjour."

A CEB member, however, pointed out that the film was "so beautifully shot that [its direction] fell to here and had difficulty executing it." The performances rendered by Lazarte, Garcia and Ina Mina were commendable, Bayot added.

Also in the film are Michael de Mesa, Alan Shade, Julianne Cruz and Ping Medina.

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 BAHAY KUBO

2 KATAS NG SAUDI

3 BANAL, SARALI, SAKLOLO

4 SUPER HAMBOYS 4

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Shangri-La Plaza

SCARY NEW YEAR: Susan Roces and Kris Aquino read the cast of "Pacquin ni Sindak a Barbara," a miniseries that kicks off 2008 for ABS-CBN. It is adapted from the 1971 horror movie that starred Roces. Also in the cast of the TV series are Albert Martinez, Joel Torre, Maria Lucsan, Maja Salvador, Jay-R, Kirbie, Eva Darren and Carlos Lim.

POWER PLANT CINEMA

REBOLO	ENTENG KABISOTE 4	SARALI SARALI SAKLOLO
KATAS NG SAUDI	BAHAY KUBO	BIYAHE BATTLE N ROLL 9

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'Best of Discovery' specials

DISCOVERY CHANNEL FEATURES the "Best Of Discovery" specials from Dec. 31 to Jan. 4 and from Jan. 7 to 11.

Kicking on Dec. 31 at 10 p.m. is "Dirty Jobs: Sewer Inspector," where host and apprentice Mike Rowe introduces viewers to a hardworking group of men and women who overcome fear, danger—and sometimes stench—to accomplish their daily tasks.

In this episode, Mike pulls on his sewer inspector gumboots and braves the cockroach- and rat-infested sewers of San Francisco, California, and assists a disaster clean-up crew after a flooding.

"L.A. Ink"

Ink explodes from a sewer backup.

Tattoo culture

Discovery Travel & Living's new series, "L.A. Ink," digs deep into the tattoo culture and the artists behind it, capturing many stories behind the tattoos, and life in and out of the newest and hottest tattoo shop in Los Angeles.

This season, viewers can catch celebrity clients like Hip Hop star Eve, Queen of Pain Jenna Jameson, ex-Nick Stax frontman Sebastian Bach, Jesse Metcalfe of Desperate Housewives fame, Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian and Punk icon of the band Social Distortion Mike Ness.

My Chemical Romance getting inked.

The series airs every Wednesday beginning Jan. 2, 10 p.m., with episodes airing every Saturday at 11 p.m.

Extreme behaviors

Animal Planet premiers an all-

"DIRTY Jobs: Sewer Inspector"

new season of "Most Extreme," an engaging look at how the best—and worst—of the human world stacks up against the animal kingdom.

It looks at the most extreme insects, hunters, medics, freaky fliers, crazy collectors, body-snatchers, grudgers, nightlights and psychics and profiles the fiercest jobs in the animal kingdom.

The series airs Wednesdays beginning Jan. 2 at 8 p.m., with encores on Sundays at 10 a.m.

Award-winning musical

HBOM Channel's prize time movie festival on Jan. 1, 9 p.m., is the musical "West Side Story," directed by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise.

Winner of 10 Academy Awards including Best Picture, the musical sets the ageless tragedy of Romeo and Juliet in the slums of 1950s New York and stars Natalie Wood and Richard Beymer.

"MOST Extreme"

"WEST Side Story"

Marical Eric

Marian Shaina Yasmien Eugene Ms. Gloria

Mark Rayver Jiro Bearwin

Bahay Kubo

A Pinoy Mano Po!

Isabella Sam Rita

BARRY to 250

NOW SHOWING! GP

Maayong Pag-abot sa mga Smart Pinoy!

Home for the holidays, OFWs get a Grand Salubong from Smart Pinoy at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

Gone for two years, working as a domestic helper in DOHA, Qatar, Elsa Manchavez couldn't wait to be reunited with her five children and was excited to be spending Christmas back home. So, when Qatar Airways flight 058 arrived at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA), she was the first to get off.

Beating everyone else to the arrival area, Elsa was the first to step into a surprise welcome for returning Filipino workers led by officials of Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA).

A Hero's Welcome

The launch of the "SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong" at MCIA was a festive affair packed with lots of surprises.

"We are honored that OWWA and the MCIAA have given us this opportunity to pay tribute to our Overseas Filipino Workers arriving in Cebu this holiday season. We hope that they enjoy the praise and surprises that we have prepared for them," said Danilo J. Mojica, head of SMART's Wireless Consumer Division.

Upon arrival, our modern-day heroes received leis from SMART celebrity endorsers led by comedy king Dolphy, Vice Hot Babe Jhen Rosendahl, child star Steven Fermo, and to personality Epy Quizon who hosted the short welcome program together with Mikee Cojuangco of DOLE.

Each of them also got a chance to win premium items including SMART cell phones and Wow Magic Sing microphones in an instant win-and-a-prize treat.

Cocktails were served at the arrival area and entertainment was provided by the Southwestern University Dance Troop and the Department of Tourism's Ronstella.

Three Months of Surprises

A three-month tribute to OFWs, SMART Pinoy OFW Grand Salubong will run until February 28, 2008. Through this project, SMART, OWWA and the MCIAA, with partners Isuzu Philippines and Wow Magic sing, wish to give homage to our hard-working countrymen who continue to provide invaluable contribution to the Philippines.

A total of 100 prizes will be raffled off in the Smart Pinoy OFW Salubong Grand Draw on February 28, 2008. These include 20 Wow Magic Sing microphones, 20 Smart Bro computer packages, 50 flight miles equivalent to a domestic flight for two, 20 Smart eLoad businesses and a brand new Isuzu Crosswind XT/ Limited Edition.

For a chance to win in the grand raffle, returning Filipino workers need only to register their SMART SIMs to automatically earn one electronic raffle. Additional raffle entries can be earned when they use any of Smart's international services.

Cebu Center of Visayas and Gateway to Mindanao

In the coming months OFWs going home to Visayas and those en route to Mindanao are expected to arrive at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport.

"Our kababayans are known to have made a lot of sacrifices. It is but fitting that when come a year, as they come home to their families, we make them feel how much we appreciate all of their hard work for us," said BGen. Danilo Augusto B. Francia, general manager of MCIAA.

"It will be a warm and VIP welcome for them," according to Wilfredo Mosena, Regional Director of OWWA 7.

Tribute through Service

The grand salubong is also SMART's way of thanking Filipino overseas workers for their patronage of SMART's growing line of innovative international services that keep them close to home and constantly in touch with their families wherever their work brings them.

"As the Philippines' biggest mobile network to the world, SMART will continue to give tribute to our OFWs through the creation of services and products which cater not only to their communication needs but also to their livelihood projects," said Jay Mendoza, head of International Business, Smartmud Financial Services Group.

Smart Pinoy was launched late last year as part of SMART's efforts to better serve the global Filipino. Its products and services are available in over 200 countries abroad in partnership with over 400 international network partners. Those include 100 international SMS and MMS value-added services like international voice text and voice text to voice, cellular reloading via Smart Load and remittance service like Smart Padala.

It is because of these services that Elsa and other 'Smart Pinoys' have the fastest, easiest and most affordable means to connect and stay close to their loved ones all year round.

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